



The Apostle Paul, Servant of Christ

Overview Study Guide Introduction

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Introduction

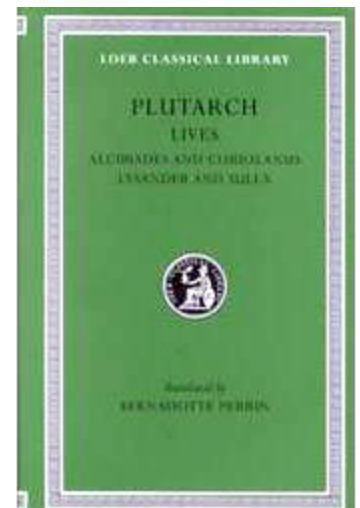
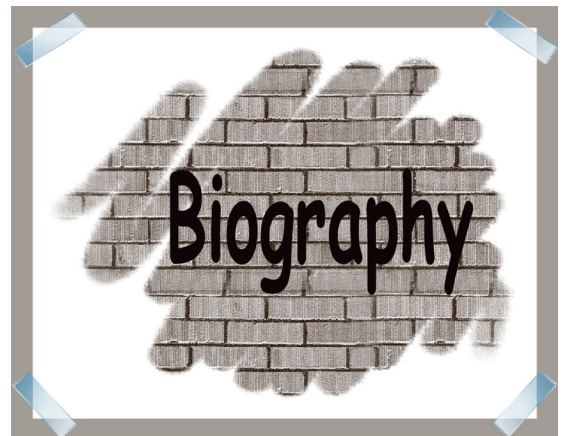
0.0 How does one grasp the profound thinking of another person? Only with difficulty and by determined effort. This is the simple answer to the question. Since the introduction of the modern literary genre called biography in English literature during the eighteenth century, the western world has been fascinated with studying the lives of people who have significantly impacted culture and society. The biographical approaches to such study have evolved into a variety of shapes over the past three centuries, but fascination with the story of important individuals has remained unchanged.

0.1 This interest extends not only to prominent people in the modern era, but also to historical characters who have shaped history, sometimes going back many centuries. Certainly, some of the more prominent individuals in the pages of the Bible are included in this biographical fascination. Abraham, Moses, some of the prophets come out of Hebrew history, and also Judas Maccabees along with a few others in the four century interval between the Old and New Testaments of the Christian Bible. In early Christianity Jesus and Paul represent the two individuals most often probed biographically.

How does one go about developing a biography of an ancient character? The sources of information are usually very limited in quantity, and often in quality as well. Modern techniques of biographical writing are significantly different than the scattered efforts of biographical interest that existed in the ancient world. In the classical world of Greece and Rome, interest existed in writing about famous individuals, mostly the Roman emperors. These were labeled "The Life of -----." One of the best known ancient biographers was Plutarch (c. 46-120 AD).¹ These were labeled in Greek a *Bíos*, or Life. But an ancient Greek or Roman *Life of* ---- was not particularly interested in any historical recounting of the individual.² Some history is usually included, and these accounts are often helpful mainly for the social history aspect that provides insight into patterns of acceptable and unacceptable social behavior in

¹"The first biographical works to be written by Plutarch were the Lives of the Roman Emperors from Augustus to Vitellius. Of these, only the Lives of Galba and Otho survive. The Lives of Tiberius and Nero are extant only as fragments, provided by Dasmascius (Life of Tiberius, cf. his Life of Isidore)[8] and Plutarch himself (Life of Nero, cf. Galba 2.1), respectively. These early emperors' biographies were probably published under the Flavian dynasty or during the reign of Nerva (CE 96-98)." ["Plutarch," *Wikipedia.org*]

²"As he explains in the first paragraph of his Life of Alexander, Plutarch was not concerned with writing histories, as such, but in exploring the influence of character — good or bad — on the lives and destinies of famous men. And he wished to prove that the more remote past of Greece could show its men of action and achievement as well as the nearer, and therefore more impressive, past of Rome." ["Plutarch," *Wikipedia.org*]



the ancient world. On the other hand, modern biography is centered on an accurate recounting of the events in a person's life as foundational to telling the story of how the person became significant and important. Separating fact from fiction is a critical aspect of evaluating the sources to be used for writing a modern biography. Such concerns played virtually no role at all in the ancient world. History, ἱστορία, itself was a sub-discipline of philosophy in that world, and, as such, history writing was but one channel for advocating the philosopher's view of reality and life.³

0.2 So how then can a modern student of the Bible come to a historical, and in particular, a biographical, understanding of a biblical character such as the apostle Paul? Central to such a task is the methodology followed in developing a biographical understanding. Basic to this methodology is **the issue of the sources** of information used to generate a biographical perspective. While many complex issues are connected to the matter of information sources, the more pivotal concerns revolve around a few questions:

1. What sources of information are available?
2. Can I trust the accuracy of the sources?
3. How should I best utilize them?

We will consider these questions, which lay a foundation for developing our understanding of the Apostle Paul.

0.2.1 What sources of information are available? The first impulse is to answer, material from the Bible? And such an answer would not be wrong, but it is not the complete answer. Writings about Paul in the post-apostolic church beginning in the second century contain substantial information regarding Paul's life and ministry. In one category of such documents, quite a number of writings are actually attributed to Paul himself, such as *The Gospel of Paul*.⁴ These writings are not found in the New Testament, but do constitute a legitimately possible source of information that any careful scholar has to consider and evaluate. The first stage in the process of developing an understanding of Paul is to identify all the possible sources of information that exist regarding the apostle.

0.2.2 Can I trust the accuracy of the sources? Once the available sources of information have been collected, the scholar must evaluate the worth and value of each of these sources. Principles of history writing, and of most biography writing as well, since the Enlightenment have placed significant importance on the historical accuracy of the sources used by the biographer to present the life story of an individual. This creates special challenges for one probing the life of a person who lived prior to the modern era. History and biography in the ancient world had little interest in distinguishing between facts and fiction about individuals; the motivating dynamic for producing stories about past individuals was to make a philosophical point that the biographer held regardless of whether or not the individual himself held to such views. When the scholar observes how quickly and easily ancient writers incorporated fantasy into their stories about prominent individuals, great caution in the use of sources becomes very important.

But if we are primarily depending on biblical sources, can't we distinguish between these sources and everything else? The biblical sources are completely trustworthy, but the others may or may not be. The research would be much easier were such true. The typical rationale for such thinking is that divine inspiration of scripture sets these materials apart from the rest, and guarantees the trustworthiness of the biblical sources. But this view reflects an incorrect understanding of the nature of divine inspiration of the Bible, as I set forth years ago in the *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* article on "Inspiration." Divine inspiration doesn't eliminate the human factor in the composition of the documents of scripture, as honest comparison of the 'double and triple tradition' materials in the Synoptic Gospels and the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament fields of study unquestionably illustrates. With the study on Paul, several hard issues of conflicting chronological data will surface between what Paul said about himself and what Luke said about him in the book of Acts. Thus, the issue of sources is more

³"In the Poetics, Aristotle argued that poetry is superior to history, because poetry speaks of what must or should be true, rather than merely what is true. This reflects early axial concerns (good/bad, right/wrong) over metaphysical concerns for what "is". Accordingly, classical historians felt a duty to ennoble the world. In keeping with philosophy of history, it is clear that their philosophy of value imposed upon their process of writing history—philosophy influenced method and hence product.

"Herodotus, considered by some as the first systematic historian, and, later, Plutarch freely invented speeches for their historical figures and chose their historical subjects with an eye toward morally improving the reader. History was supposed to teach one good examples to follow. The assumption that history 'should teach good examples' influenced how history was written. Events of the past are just as likely to show bad examples that are not to be followed, but these historians would either not record them or re-interpret them to support their assumption of history's purpose." ["Philosophy of History," Wikipedia.org]

⁴The non-canonical sources of information fall into three basic categories: 1. Non-religious writings of the first few Christian centuries from Roman, Greek, and Jewish sources; 2. the Church Fathers of the first eight centuries; and 3. the New Testament Apocryphal Writings related to the apostle Paul.

complex than most would like for it to be.

0.2.3 How should I best utilize the sources? How the biographer uses his sources is critical for the kind of story about the featured person he tells. Rigid implementation of strict guidelines for determining factual information can lead to more of a 'chronology' of a person's life than a biography. The reader may then come to understand when a person was born and when he died, and some of the things the individual did between these two points. But that's about all. Modern biographical interest is more focused on answering the question, "What made the person tick?" What were his motivations? What kind of personality did he have? How did he relate to other people? What was it that made him great? For the last century or so, contemporary biographical writing spends as much time probing the inner 'psychological' questions, as it does presenting the factual history of the individual. And a key research technique here is the Kantian 'cause and effect' set of assumptions. Two of these are particularly significant here. Kant followed the Enlightenment emphasis on reason that assumed that all events in history were caused by other events happening prior to them. Secondly in his *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* in 1788 (*Critique of Practical Reason*), he mediated the controversy between empirical and rationalist views with the impact that all knowable knowledge is human based and is determined by humans. Understanding what drives individuals is then critical to understanding them. Thus history is strictly human history, and understanding the inner motivations of humans is crucial to correct grasping of history. Kant's views have had profound impact on western culture and society.

The challenge for the biographer writing about an ancient individual is that none of his ancient sources are going to be concerned with these kinds of questions. And so a modern biography about an ancient person that probes inner motivations will inevitably be highly speculative and based on conclusions with little foundational information from his sources. Countless numbers of such biographies of the Apostle Paul have been produced in the last century or so, but few of them have merit and lasting insight.

Our approach will be to use great caution when assessing what motivated the Apostle Paul. Sometimes the materials, especially his own writings, will state directly his motivation. And this gives a more solid basis for drawing conclusions. But often nothing is contained in the sources to signal motivation for action by the apostle. In such instances, we will refrain from drawing conclusions about motivations.

0.2.4 Another aspect in how to utilize available sources of information relates to the so-called **Primary / Secondary Source** issue. In much of twentieth century Pauline studies this was a burning issue for scholars. The meaning of these two terms shifts with different contextual uses of them. Most fundamentally, a Primary Source is a writing from the individual being studied himself, while a Secondary Source is a writing from someone else saying something about the individual being studied. This has important implications for studying the life of Paul. What Paul himself said he did and didn't do takes precedence over everything others said that he did or didn't do, including what Luke said in the book of Acts. For a long time after John Knox published his *Chapters in a Life of Paul* in the 1950s, this debate heated up regarding the primacy of a "Pauline Paul" over a "Lukan Paul." The discussion is still around in some scholarly circles, but doesn't generate a lot of discussion these days.⁵ This approach was one of the proposals set on the table as a way of resolving some of the chronological issues between Paul's writings and the Book of Acts, along with addressing what was perceived to be Luke's portrayal of Paul as the controversial 'Gentile oriented' leader over against Peter as the 'Jewish oriented' leader of the early Christian movement.

At another level of meaning, Primary / Secondary Sources means that sources out of the beginning Christian century are considered Primary, while writings in the second century onward are considered Secondary. This definitional understanding of the two terms has not generated the controversy that the first definitional perspectives have. In general, the greater the distance between the time frame of the subject of the biography and that of the writing trying to describe his life, the less credibility should be attached to the Secondary Sources. The Apostolic Fathers like Clement of Rome writing at the close of the first Christian century were closer in time to the time of Paul, and should be given greater importance as Secondary Sources than the Fathers writing in the Middle Ages for example. But again every source must be evaluated for its accuracy, and chronological distance is not the only criteria of evaluation.

0.3 When checking **modern era biographies of the Apostle Paul**, a distinct set of issues surface. The

⁵In 1990, I served as Issue Editor of the *Southwestern Journal of Theology* produced at SWBTS in Fort Worth. The focus of that issue in the fall volume was on the Acts of the Apostles. I was able to convince Prof. F.F. Bruce of the UK to write an article on the Lukan Paul for that issue of the journal. I had gotten to know this legendary NT scholar through SNTS meetings in Europe and through his periodic visits to the SWBTS campus in Ft. Worth to deliver lectures. As it turned out, this was one of the final publications of Prof. Bruce, since he passed away shortly after submitting the article for publication. This is one of those treasured memories.

type of biography needs to be determined. Is it slanted toward history or theology? Also, the depth of scholarly insight is significant. Did the biographer do original research that contributes genuinely new insights? Or, did he re-hash old stuff largely from other modern secondary sources? And thus, his material offers no really new understanding of Paul. Or, perhaps he merely attempted to summarize existing viewpoints about Paul. This goal has legitimacy in certain situations. The place to begin checking out these issues is the Preface of the book, and perhaps then the introductory chapter. A third place to check is the conclusion chapter. From these sections you will be able to determine a lot about what the biographer is attempting to accomplish. And, whether or not, the publication is worth spending time reading!



0.3.1 Another aspect of research methodology is **establishing a chronological framework** in Pauline studies. Nothing in the biblical sources indicates when Paul was born nor when he died. Also the location of his birth and death are not even hinted at in the biblical sources. From both Acts and the autobiographical passages in Paul's letters, we can piece together some of the significant events during his life. But how does one attach a calendar date to any of these?

The so-called Christian calendar⁶ used throughout the western world today is based on the incorrect assumption that year one begins with the birth of Christ. More importantly, the calendar systems in place at the beginning of the Christian era have no connection to the Christian calendar, apart from the ancient Roman calendar. Most, such as the Jewish calendar, were lunar based calendars rather than a solar based calendar such as the Christian calendar. The ancient Roman calendar, as used in the first Christian century, was primarily lunar in nature but was a little more accurate than most of the other lunar calendars of that time. The Julian calendar and its successor the Gregorian calendar in the sixteenth century both use the same names of the months as did the ancient Roman calendar. But these labels do not sync with one another at all, largely because of the different foundations for each system.



For us to understand time frames, a chronological framework for Paul's life and ministry must be established. But nowhere either in the biblical sources nor the Church Fathers sources will dates be given that mesh with the modern Christian calendar automatically. But at a couple of places in the New Testament, names of people or events will be mentioned that can be dated with precision on the Roman calendar which can then be converted over to the Gregorian calendar with certainty of date, sometimes down to the day of the month in a specific year.

The Roman governor of Achaëa, Gallio, was in Corinth when Paul was there on the second missionary journey in Acts 18:12-17. From detailed Roman records his tenure as proconsul of the senatorial province of Achaëa was either in 51-52 or 52-53 AD. This is the most certain date mentioned in Paul's life in the New Testament. So Paul's eighteen month tenure in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:11, "He stayed there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.") took place during 51-52 or 52-53 AD. This opens the door for converting dates of the other major events in Paul's life both previous to this point and subsequent to it by using the occasional time references to years, and sometimes to months and days found in both Acts and Paul's writings.⁷ Making all of

⁶The Gregorian calendar is also known as the Western calendar or the Christian calendar. It was introduced February 24, 1582 by Pope Gregory XIII after the notorious inaccuracies of the prior Julian calendar mandated serious revision and modification. For details see "Gregorian calendar," [wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar) at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar.

⁷This necessitates careful consideration of all the time references to Paul's movements that are provided mostly in Acts and a

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this fit into a chronological span of time poses substantial difficulties. But the Gallio tenure in Corinth, and Luke's mentioning of Emperor Claudius' banning of the Jews from the city of Rome in Acts 18:2, are two of the more significant 'bridges' from NT time references to the modern Gregorian calendar.

When the primary verses secondary source issue of Paul's writings and Acts is brought into the discussion as Knox and many others since him have insisted upon, the issue then becomes this: do we build a chronological time span for Paul's life just from his writings (as per Knox and others)? Or, do we use both Acts and Paul's writings as basic sources?⁸ Traditionally, the framework of Acts has been the main time source and the scattered time references in Paul's writings are fit into the Acts structure. But this violates a major principle of modern historiography: primary sources must be the primary source of information; secondary sources cannot be allowed to take precedence over primary sources. This has been the center of much debate during the past sixty years regarding Pauline chronology. One of the consequences of this debate in contemporary Pauline scholarship has been the diminished role of chronology in Pauline studies. This has had the unfortunate effect of turning many of these publications into studying a non-historical fantasy figure, more than a flesh and blood human being who lived and served at a specific time of history. We do the biblical narrative a grave injustice with such approaches.

0.3.2 Finally, what is the objective of our study? In the multitudinous volumes that have been written about the life of Paul over the past four hundred years, the objective of the scholar normally falls either into a historical account, or into a theological account. Thus the books on Paul will tend to focus on history or theology. Before laying out our objective for this study guide, I want to briefly summarize some of the publications that have had impact on the modern study of the life of Paul. Later on, we will look at the full historical picture.

0.3.2.1 The trend in the study of Paul's life has made some significant shifts over the past several centuries.⁹ Until the beginning of the modern era, not much attention was paid to the person of Paul. The focus was on theology, and a pre-determined theology, usually labeled dogma, was supported by proof-texting scripture references from the writings of Paul. With the Enlightenment emphasis upon history in the seventeenth century came some profound shifts in Pauline studies. This provided opponents of rigid traditionalism in both Roman Catholic and especially in Protestant churches in Europe the opportunity to re-focus on the 'historical Jesus' and upon the apostle Paul as a historical person. Coupled with the new Protestant emphasis upon scripture, many European scholars began exploring historical oriented aspects of Paul's life and ministry.¹⁰

few in his own writings. Often approximations are required when no specific mention of time is present. Sometimes having to make calculations this way results in difficult chronological issues, but it is the only way it can be done.

The most notorious one is the series of time (and place) references in Galatians chapters one and two: 1:18, "Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days;"; 1:21, "Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia"; 2:1, "Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along with me." Is Paul's second trip (if a 2nd trip or only a subsequent trip, Luke mentions 3 trips while Paul only two) to Jerusalem 14 or 17 years after his conversion? The second missionary journey with the time in Corinth before Gallio comes at least one or two years afterwards. If two years are assumed, then 19 years have possibly passed from conversion to the appearance before Gallio. The math is simple: subtract 19 from 52 or 53, and you have his conversion at 33 or 34 AD. But Jesus ascended to Heaven no earlier than 30 AD, and possibly as late as 33 AD. From Jesus' ascension in Acts one to Paul's conversion in Acts nine, a period substantially more than a few months is described by Luke. So considerable time must be allowed for between Jesus' ascension and Paul's conversion. But reconciling such time data is not easy. Understanding the starting point for both the three years (1:18) and the fourteen years (2:1) to be the same, his conversion, reduces the tension somewhat, but not completely. Most projections will suggest his conversion in 33 AD, some three years after Jesus' ascension.

⁸In Part I, chapter 1 of the study guide, I will propose a working chronology of the life of the Apostle Paul that attempts to give balanced consideration to the autobiographical materials in Paul's writings and also to Luke account in Acts. This will be supplemented from other sources as well.

⁹For an extensive bibliographic listing, see *NT Gateway: Paul the Apostle: Books and Articles* at <http://www.ntgateway.com/paul-the-apostle/general-resources/books-and-articles/>. Mark Goodacre at Duke University maintains this web site and it is inclusive of the most current of biblical scholarship on the study of Paul.

Also the *Paul Page* gateway contains a **Bibliography** page that is oriented to more recent scholarship in Pauline studies: <http://www.thepaulpage.com/new-perspective/bibliography/>.

Additionally, the gateway "Paul and the Pauline Epistles" at *Insights into Religion* is a good place to find a variety of sources of information regarding the study of Paul: <http://www.textweek.com/pauline/paul.htm>. A good variety of perspectives is listed here.

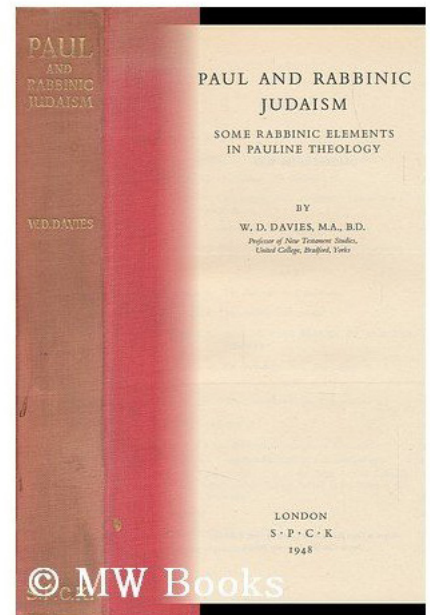
Also helpful at the *NT Gateway* is the listing of reliable web sites devoted to the study of Paul. Click on <http://www.ntgateway.com/paul-the-apostle/general-resources/web-sites/> for links to these web site. Some of these are highly scholarly oriented but they reflect honest scholarship in this field of study. Dr. Goodacre regularly updates the listings, and doesn't permit questionable listings.

¹⁰One should remember that biblical scholarship in the 'new world' of the western hemisphere did not emerge with any significant impact on Christian thinking until the middle of the twentieth century. No significant universities with strong academic and scholarly emphasis were present either in North or South America until the twentieth century. The so-called 'Ivy League' schools of

With the emergence of the modern biography as a literary genre in the eighteenth century, interest in developing a biography of Paul emerged, and, at minimum, a historical understanding of Paul. The study of Paul historically exploded in the 1800s with the emergence of F. C. Baur and the “Tübingen School” in Germany that grew up around him.¹¹ Prof. Baur was deeply indebted to the influential comparative religion philosophy dominant in Europe during this time. The quest was to find the core elements of ‘religion’ that exist in all the major religions of the world. Such discovery would become the basis for evaluative comparison of these religions, and would be the basis for developing a unified religious view of the world. Historical analysis was the prime methodology for research. Baur’s work and those who were a part of this movement beginning at the University of Tübingen managed to ‘set the agenda’ for Pauline studies in the middle 1800s that continues to be pivotal to this day among scholars of all theological persuasions; this agenda includes the center of Paul’s thinking, Paul’s relationship to the Jewish Law, and the opposition that Paul faced.¹² Historical methodology was foundational to Baur’s work which was a radical departure from traditional views. To understand Paul, one first turns to sources. For Baur, only four documents in the New Testament could be trusted as dependable sources of Paul’s thinking: Romans, First and Second Corinthians, and Galatians. Every other Pauline writing was rejected as authentic, along with the Acts of the Apostles. These constituted secondary sources with limited value for understanding the historical Paul; instead they give us something of the ‘legacy’ of Paul’s influence on later Christian thinking.¹³



The radical nature of Baur’s proposal triggered both positive and negation reactions. But the level of his scholarly work demanded a hearing for him in European circles. *Who was this Jewish Christian who changed the face of Christianity profoundly?* Did he corrupt or preserve the teachings of Jesus in the gospels?¹⁴ Was Paul heavily influenced in his thinking by non-Jewish sources from Hellenism?¹⁵ This was linked to the Tarsus (Hellenism) or Jerusalem (Judaism) debates that emerged from this discussion. Sharp lines of distinction were drawn,¹⁶ until the influential work of the British scholar W.D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, forced the scholarly world to acknowledge that the line of distinction between Greek and Jewish influences on Paul



New England in North America were developing programs, but did not possess the heritage of scholarly activity until after World War I. South American religious scholarship was centered in Roman Catholic tradition, which did not participate in these emerging trends until the middle of the twentieth century, and then only vigorously after Vatican Council II in the 1960s.

¹¹“F. C. Baur (1792–1860), professor of theology at Tübingen in Germany, the first scholar to critique Acts and the Pauline Epistles, and founder of the Tübingen School of theology, argued that Paul, as the ‘Apostle to the Gentiles’, was in violent opposition to the original 12 Apostles. Baur considers the Acts of the Apostles were late and unreliable. This debate has continued ever since, with Adolf Deissmann (1866–1937) and Richard Reitzenstein (1861–1931) emphasizing Paul’s Greek inheritance and Albert Schweitzer stressing his dependence on Judaism.” [“Paul the Apostle,” Wikipedia.org]

¹²“Nevertheless, despite the increased volume of studies, the basic perspectives of the Tübingen School provided both the framework and presuppositions for the modern study of Paul’s writings until the mid-1970s. Hence, as a result of the agenda set by Baur’s work, Pauline research in the twentieth century has predominantly focused on the interrelated questions of the center of Paul’s thinking, Paul’s view of the Law and the nature of Paul’s opponents. Moreover, the central questions raised by Baur concerning Paul’s theology and his place in the history of the early church still remain to be resolved.” [Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 666. S.V., “Paul and his interpreters,” S.J. Hafemann.]

¹³Given Baur’s devout Lutheran heritage and his philosophical bent, it is not surprising that his picture of Paul closely resembles a German Lutheran liberal university professor of the nineteenth century.

¹⁴Central here is the connection between Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom of God and Paul’s emphasis on salvation.

¹⁵Important here was whether or not Paul was shaped by Gnostic thinking? The topic ‘Paul’s mysticism’ opened the door to extensive debate here.

¹⁶In the 1930s the Lutheran scholar Albert Schweitzer had challenged the Greek view of Paul with two publications: *Paul and his Interpreters* and *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*. But Schweitzer worked off the ‘either / or’ assumption of Baur, while adopting a Jewish eschatological view of Paul. It would be W.D. Davies who convinced the scholarly world that these two ‘sides’ of Paul were not mutually exclusive of one another, and thus the option was not an either / or, but instead a both / and choice.

was not nearly so clear as German scholars following Baur had assumed.¹⁷

Who are Paul's enemies? Galatians clearly identifies "Judaizers" as those who opposed Paul's teaching of 'justification by faith, apart from works of Law.' With the Hegelian dialectical philosophy that Baur assumed, the Judaizers were the Jewish Christians in the sphere of Peter's and James' influence in Jerusalem. Thus Galatians is an 'anti-Peter' letter by Paul condemning Peter and his followers, and the Letter of James is an 'anti-Paul' condemnation rebutting Paul. Interestingly, the book of Acts is a second century effort to make peace between the developed Jewish and non-Jewish streams of Christian teaching.¹⁸ This perceived scenario of Baur has triggered all kinds of reactions both in favor and vigorously opposed for well over a century. Thus a flurry of biblical scholarship concerning Paul and his writings has emerged since the work of Baur in the 1830s.

In the English speaking world of Pauline scholarship, the trends of research began shifting in the 1970s. The work of scholars such as E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, N.T. Wright, among others, began challenging the understanding of Paul's opposition to 'Judaizers' regarding the role of the OT Law of Moses in Paul's thought.¹⁹ Sensing that an impasse had pretty much been reached following the framework of the Tübingen School, Ed Sanders released in 1977 his *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* which has had significant impact in moving the issues of Pauline studies into new directions.²⁰ James D.G. Dunn took his Manson Memorial Lecture given at the University of Manchester on November 4, 1982 into a full book publication *The New Perspective on Paul: Revised Edition* by 2008 and he coined the phrase "New Perspective on Paul."²¹ The primary focus here is on

¹⁷Heavily embedded in the decisive German preference for the "Greek" side of Paul much to the exclusion of the "Jewish" side was the extensive anti-Semitism that prevailed in Europe from both Catholic and Lutheran teachings. The centrality of Paul in Martin Luther's experience in the 1500s meant that Paul could not be dismissed. But to allow Paul his full Jewish heritage made him less tolerable to extensive anti-Jewish attitudes current in European society in the 1800s. By opting for a dominant Greek influence on the apostle, he became much more easily the heroic figure that Lutheran heritage stressed.

¹⁸In the background here was the nineteenth century tension between Roman Catholicism and Lutheranism in central and northern Europe. Anti-Catholic attitudes were strong here; Peter and James were the symbols of Catholicism, as a legacy of Luther's debates with the Catholic church in the 1500s. Thus the New Testament -- as interpreted by this school of thought -- served as a anti-Catholic 'billy club' to attack the Roman church.

¹⁹Although a bit overblown, the introductory page of the web site *The Paul Page* captures the essence of this so-called 'new perspective' on Paul from an insider's view:

Over the last three decades, a revolutionary breakthrough in New Testament scholarship has been rocking the academic Christian world. The scholars at the forefront of the revolution — E.P. Sanders, James D.G. Dunn, N.T. Wright, and others — have been pioneering a new approach to the letters of the first-century apostle to the Gentiles, Paul of Tarsus.

These Protestants are engaging first-century Judaism on its own terms, not in the context of the Protestant-Catholic debates of the sixteenth century. The result: A new historical perspective on the meaning of Paul's polemic against the Judaizers which occupies so much of his recorded correspondence.

What is this new perspective? At its core is the recognition that Judaism is not a religion of self-righteousness whereby humankind seeks to merit salvation before God. Paul's argument with the Judaizers was not about Christian grace versus Jewish legalism. His argument was rather about the status of Gentiles in the church. Paul's doctrine of justification, therefore, had far more to do with Jewish-Gentile issues than with questions of the individual's status before God.

This new perspective on Paul promises to help us:

- * Better understand Paul and the early church;
- * Reconcile contemporary biblical scholarship with theology;
- * Build common ground between Catholics and Protestants;
- * Improve dialogue between Christians and Jews; and
- * Flesh out a theological foundation for social justice.

²⁰"Sanders argued that the traditional Christian interpretation that Paul was condemning Rabbinic legalism was a misunderstanding of both Judaism and Paul's thought, especially since it assumed a level of individualism in these doctrines that was not present, and disregarded notions of group benefit or collective privilege. Rather, Sanders argued, the key difference between pre-Christian Judaism and Pauline teaching was to be found in ideas of how a person becomes one of the People of God. Sanders termed the Jewish belief 'covenantal nomism': one was a member of the people by virtue of God's covenant with Abraham, and one stayed in it by keeping the Law.

"Sanders claimed that Paul's belief was one of participationist eschatology: the only way to become one of the People of God was through faith in Christ ('dying with Christ') and the Old Covenant was no longer sufficient. But, once inside, appropriate behavior was required of the Christian, behavior based on the Jewish Scriptures, but not embracing all aspects of it. Both patterns required the grace of God for election (admission), and the behavior of the individual, supported by God's grace. The dividing line, therefore, was Paul's insistence on faith in Christ as the only way to election. However, Sanders stressed that Paul also 'loved good deeds' [2] and that when his words are taken in context, it emerges that Paul advocates good works in addition to faith in Christ. [2]" ["E.P. Sanders," *Wikipedia.org*]

²¹"The New Perspective on Paul' by James D.G. Dunn originally appeared in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Vol. 65, 1983, pp. 95-122. It was included in Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (London: SPCK), 1990, pp.

Paul's theology, rather than his history. And at the center of this theological focus is the idea of salvation in Paul. Sanders and others have challenged the traditional Lutheran based view of Law and Gospel with the charge that it failed to understand the Judaism of Paul's day, and that Paul was not nearly so hostile to Judaism as he has been made out to be. Pauline teaching on salvation is understood from a corporate perspective and not just from an individual perspective.²² Many of these core ideas have sparked considerable debate and discussion, not the least motivated by 'this is new thinking from English speaking world' and not from European sources. It represents serious efforts to separate out a modern perspective from a first century one, and then interpret the first century view on its own terms, rather than through the prisms of issues and cultural trends current in the modern setting.

This somewhat new direction in Pauline studies has spawned numerous efforts to probe the first century world of Judaism in particular.²³ With the rise of sociological oriented research into the ancient world, publications exploring the social world of Paul are surfacing. But most of the research activity is centered on exegesis of texts and the theological perspective understood from Paul's writings.²⁴ Especially important is Paul's eschatology and soteriology.

This 'new perspective' has triggered considerable critique, while much of the Reformation based research has continued on without paying much attention to the new direction. S.J. Hafemann offers a helpful assessment of the future of Pauline studies:

After 150 years of Pauline studies there still remains a need for a comprehensive developmental, rather than conflict, model of Paul's life and thought, and for the corresponding cultivation of a biblical theology which incorporates Paul's apostolic role and theology within the history of the early church. This need has been underscored by the study of Paul from an explicitly Jewish perspective (in addition to the work by Schoeps, see Samuel Sandmel, *The Genius of Paul: A Study in History*, 1958; Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Paulus, Der Völkerapostel in jüdischer Sicht*, 1970; and now Alan F. Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, 1990). But even adherents to the "New Perspective" on Paul, who have worked hard to renew our understanding of Paul within the Judaism of his day, have often not taken the Jewish matrix of Paul's own thinking seriously enough as the decisive conceptual source for Paul's thinking. Moreover, at the heart of the debate concerning the Law and the role of justification in Paul's thought is the question of Paul's understanding of redemptive history (cf. Gal 3-4; 2 Cor 3:7-18; Rom 3:21-16; 9-11), which itself can only be solved by a renewed study of Paul's use and understanding of the OT within the larger question of the relationship of Paul and his gospel to Israel as the old covenant

183-214; more recently in Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Collected Essays* (WUNT 185; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck), 2005; now available from Eerdmans: James D.G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul: Revised Edition* © 2008 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Reprinted by permission of the publisher; all rights reserved. Visit <http://www.eerdmans.com> for ordering information, or call 1-800-253-7521 in the U.S. The 'Additional Note' following the essay is unique to the SPCK volume and has been included at the author's request with the permission of SPCK.

"The Manson Memorial Lecture delivered in the University of Manchester on 4 November 1982. Subsequently delivered in modified form as one of the Wilkinson Lectures in the Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, Illinois, under the title 'Let Paul be Paul'." ["The New Perspective on Paul," at <http://markgoodacre.org/PaulPage/New.html>]

²²"In broadest terms the New Perspective emphasizes the corporate nature of our salvation in distinction from the typical way many North Americans think about their salvation primarily as 'a personal relationship with Jesus.' The best forms of the New Perspective do not deny the personal aspects of our salvation but contend that a focus on individual blessings is more a product of Western culture than a reflection of the Apostle Paul's design for the New Testament church. What we need to remember is that the Bible never divorces our corporate identity from our personal faith – we who believe are members of the body of Christ. Still, without personal faith and repentance we cannot truly unite with Christ no matter how much we participate in the Church's corporate heritage or practices." [Bryan Chapell, "An Explanation of the New Perspective on Paul," *Covenant Theological Seminary Online Resources* at http://worldwidefreeresources.com/upload/Chapell_NewPerspective.pdf]

²³For a detailed listing see Michael F. Bird, "The New Perspective on Paul: A Bibliographical Essay," the Paul Page at <http://www.thepaulpage.com/the-new-perspective-on-paul-a-bibliographical-essay/>.

²⁴In all honesty, one should acknowledge that this new direction on Pauline studies is culturally driven just as was the efforts of the Reformers in the 1500s, and those of F.C. Baur in the 1800s. With the rise of literary oriented approaches to reading the texts beginning in the 1970s in the US, and to some extent in the UK, I have observed in numerous professional society meetings in North America especially a deep desire for North Americans to replace the Germans as the 'movers and shakers' of biblical studies. Coupled with this is the emerging Jewish - Christian Dialogue emphasis to try to build closer relations between Christianity and Judaism. This 'new perspective' creates an enormously more positive image of contemporary Judaism. Also in the mixture is an ecumenical concern that seeks to eliminate tensions between Catholicism and Protestantism. Anti-Catholic sentiment drove much of the earlier research, but the reverse is true in the new direction. A growing rejection of American individualism is present in much of the research on Paul. Present, but not a major player is the very negative attitudes toward fundamentalist Protestantism with its near total dependency on the assumptions of Luther, Calvin and other sixteenth century reformers about the nature of salvation etc.

people of God (see *Restoration of Israel*). Such a study is only now beginning to be undertaken (see, e.g., the recent works of Dietrich-Alex Koch, *Die Schrift als Zeuge des Evangeliums, Untersuchungen zur Verwendung und zum Verständnis der Schrift bei Paulus*, 1986; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 1989; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*, 1991; and the various recent motif studies and treatments of particular key passages in which Paul quotes, alludes to, or relies upon the OT explicitly for his self-understanding and theology, such as Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul's Gospel*, 1981, James M. Scott, *Adoption as Sons of God*, 1992, and Karl Olav Sandnes, *Paul—One of the Prophets*, 1991; see *Old Testament in Paul; Prophet, Paul As*). The future of Pauline studies at this juncture in its history is dependent upon just these kinds of studies if we are to move forward in our understanding of Paul as he understood himself: the Jewish apostle to the Gentiles, whose message came from the history of his people, their Scriptures, and the history of Israel's Messiah.²⁵

0.3.2.2 Now we are ready to address the prior question, **what is the objective of our study?** *First*, let me indicate what it is not. True scholarship always seeks to make a new contribution to the research topic being addressed. This is not my objective with this study guide. To adopt such an objective would profoundly change the nature of this work from a serious overview to it becoming a technical research treatise. The audience would then shift to addressing the academic community with new proposals. While such is completely legitimate and desirable in certain settings, such an objective would not be appropriate for addressing serious Bible students desiring to understand more about the Apostle Paul and his writings.

Thus, **second**, what I do hope to achieve is a *readable survey of the biblical materials, supplemented by secondary sources, so that you, the reader, will come away with a much greater understanding and appreciation for the contributions of this apostle to your Christian faith*. Implicit in this is not only cognitive understanding of the Apostle Paul, but other goals as well. For example, an increase in your interpretive skills is a part of the objective. Knowing how to approach studying Paul is terribly important for correct understanding of Paul. This means being aware of the history of interpretation, and also some skills at methodological approach to the biblical text. With such massive amounts of writings about Paul both in print and on the internet, knowing how to critically²⁶ evaluate this material is crucial. My deep hope is that by gaining insights into the 'big picture' of Pauline studies, you can then deepen your personal understanding of the significance of Paul to the Christian faith. Thus a foundation for life-long studying of Paul will be hopefully laid through this study.



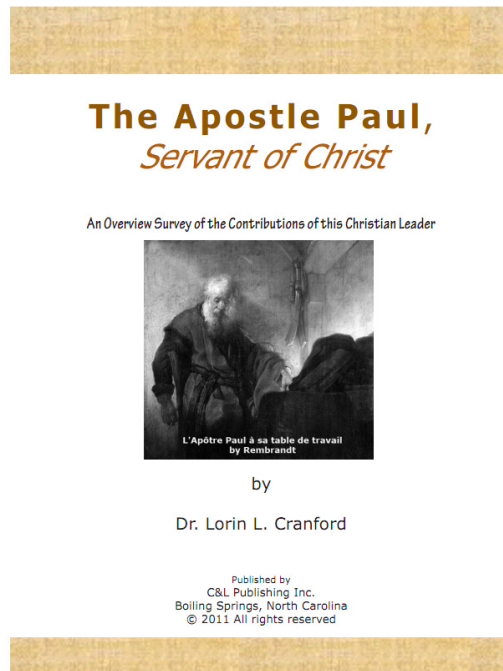
For Reflection and Further Study

A section in each chapter will offer opportunities to apply some of the concepts treated in the discussion. Of course, these are optional learning activities. But I do want to challenge the reader to begin applying appropriate skills in furthering their understanding of Paul.

1. Describe your present understanding of the apostle Paul? Include aspects about his life, his writings, and his thinking.

²⁵Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin and Daniel G. Reid, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 679. S.V., "Paul and his interpreters," S.J. Hafemann.

²⁶By 'critical' I mean the use of a solid, well defined method of determining whether a writer knows what he is talking about or not. Such is absolutely essential for assessing materials taken from the internet, since the vast majority of it is without 'peer' review. That is, other scholars with expertise on the topic have not evaluated it prior to its release to the reading public. Most major publications by recognized publishing companies have been submitted by the author to colleagues in professional meetings where they have had to vigorously defend their proposals before groups of scholars with technical expertise on the topic they are addressing. Additionally, most publishing agencies send out the draft manuscript of a proposal to a panel of experts in the field for their detailed critique before the agency accepts a proposal for publication. Unfortunately, the internet by-passes this process with the consequence that untested ideas are floated around as though they were well established facts and/or perspectives. Thus a lot of 'crud' ends up on the internet.



2. What do you hope to gain from this study? I would be especially interested in knowing your thoughts here. You can send me an email at **lorin@cranfordville.com** to let me know your personal goals.
3. From your present understanding, describe some of the questions that will surface in a studying of the life of Christ. For example, when was Paul born?
4. How many letters did Paul write? Why are they arranged the way they are in the New Testament?
5. From your present understanding, what do you think is the center of Paul's religious thinking?
6. For the really 'eager beaver' student, read the online article "Authorship of the Pauline epistles" and describe your reactions to the views presented there.²⁷

²⁷"Authorship of the Pauline epistles," *Wikipedia.org* at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Authorship_of_the_Pauline_epistles.