

CHAPTER 1

OUTLINE AND CHRONOLOGY OF PAUL'S LIFE

In order to understand and appreciate Paul's life, we must be familiar with its general outline, and with the dates of the important events. The following outline is taken from Frank J. Goodwin, *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*. There are changes in the dates, based on the evidence that will follow; and the date of the writing of Galatians is adjusted. The student should be familiar with this outline.

Events of Pauline chronology

1. Paul's early life to his first missionary journey

Conversion, A.D. 36

In Damascus and Arabia, A.D. 36-38

Escape from Damascus, first visit to Jerusalem, A.D. 38

In Tarsus and the regions of Syria and Cilicia, A.D. 38-45

A year in Antioch with Barnabas, A.D. 45-46

Second journey to Jerusalem with alms (the "famine visit"), A.D. 46 summer/fall

2. First missionary journey, A.D. 47 spring/summer – A.D. 48 summer/fall

In Antioch "a long time," A.D. 48 fall – A.D. 49 spring/summer

(Perhaps Galatians written at Antioch, A.D. 49 [early date])

3. Third visit to Jerusalem, the Council, A.D. 49 summer

4. Second missionary journey, A.D. 49 summer – A.D. 51 summer

1 Thessalonians written from Corinth, A.D. 50

2 Thessalonians written from Corinth, A.D. 50

(Perhaps Galatians written from Corinth, A.D. 50 [middle date])

Fourth visit to Jerusalem

5. Third missionary journey, A.D. 51 fall – A.D. 54 spring

Galatians written from Ephesus, sometime A.D. 51-53 [late date; traditional]

1 Corinthians written from Ephesus, A.D. 53

2 Corinthians written from Macedonia, A.D. 53 fall

(Perhaps Galatians written from Corinth, A.D. 54 winter/spring [latest date])

Romans written from Corinth, A.D. 54 winter/spring

6. Fifth visit to Jerusalem, Paul seized in the temple, A.D. 54 summer

7. Imprisonment at Caesarea, A.D. 54 summer – A.D. 56 summer

8. Journey to Rome, A.D. 56 fall – A.D. 57 spring

9. First Roman imprisonment, A.D. 57 spring – A.D. 59 spring

Ephesians written, A.D. 57 or 58

Colossians written, A.D. 57 or 58

Philemon written, A.D. 57 or 58

Philippians written, A.D. 58 or 59

(End of the book of Acts, AD 59)

10. *Between the first and second Roman imprisonments, ca. A.D. 59 - ca. A.D. 64 or 67*

1 Timothy written from Macedonia

Titus written from Ephesus

11. *Second Roman imprisonment, ca. A.D. 64 or 67*

2 Timothy written from Rome, A.D. 64 or 67

Paul's death, ca. A.D. 64 or 67

Keys to the Pauline Chronology

In order to figure out when the various events in Paul's life occurred, we must correlate the times mentioned in the Acts and epistles, the amount of time required for the various journeys, the seasons when sailing was possible, and the time synchronisms found in secular history and archaeology.

There are three primary links between Paul's life and secular history that enable us to outline his chronology. These three synchronisms provide the framework by which the chronology of Paul's life can be worked out. Even so, some of the dates are approximate, and others are uncertain.

Roman emperors:	Augustus	30 B.C. – A.D. 14
	Tiberius	A.D. 14-37
	Caligula	A.D. 37-41
	Claudius	A.D. 41-54
	Nero	A.D. 54-68

Paul's flight from Damascus, A.D. 37-40 (Acts 9:19-25)

Aretas was king of Damascus (2 Cor 11:32-33)

Aretas IV, the ethnarch, was king of the Nabateans 9 B.C. – ca. A.D. 40. Damascus had been directly under Roman control since 62 B.C.; probably it was given to Aretas by the emperor

Caligula in A.D. 37. While coins of Augustus, Tiberius, and Nero are there, there is none of Caligula or Claudius. Thus Aretas had control of Damascus A.D. 37 – ca. 40.

Paul's flight was three years after his conversion (Gal 1:18).

Proconsulship of Gallio in Achaia, A.D. 51-52 (Acts 18:12-17)

In A.D. 44 the emperor Claudius gave Achaia back to the Senate, who administered the province through a propraetor with the title proconsul. The proconsuls would rule only for a one-year term.

It is likely that Gallio held this position in A.D. 49 or later, since his brother Seneca was in better favor by that time.

The Delphi Inscription pins down the date more exactly. It mentions Gallio as procurator in the 26th proclamation of Claudius as emperor, which would have been in the first half of A.D. 52. Thus Gallio might have been in that office the year of A.D. 51-52 or of A.D. 52-53.

For detailed discussion of this inscription, see Adolph Deissmann, *Paul*, App. 1, "The Procuratorship of L. Junius Gallio," pp. 261-86, esp. p. 276; also Kirsopp Lake, *Beginnings of Christianity*, 5:460-64.

Paul had already been in Corinth on his second missionary journey ca. 1½ years (Acts 18:11).

Accession of Festus as procurator of Judaea, A.D. 56 (Acts 24:27)

The previous procurator, Felix, had been appointed by Claudius in A.D. 52. After Nero became emperor in A.D. 54 Felix fell into disfavor and was tried by Nero in Rome. His powerful brother Pallas helped him temporarily (see Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 20:8:9).

A little later Nero removed him from office and replaced him with Festus (cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 2:22:1).

For a summary of the careers of Felix and Festus, see F. F. Bruce, *New Testament History*, pp. 343-47.

Newly discovered evidence pins down the date. A coin of Nero's 5th year has the names of the consuls for the year A.D. 58, with a note that this was the third year of Festus. Therefore, the first year of Festus would have been A.D. 56. Paul had been imprisoned in Caesarea two years by this time (Acts 24:27).

See Jack Finegan, "Chronology of the NT," *New ISBE*, 1:691a. He mentions this coin as "new 'micrographic' evidence discovered by J. Vardaman." Note that F. F. Bruce (*NT History* 345-346) notes the coin from A.D. 59, but says it marked the change of coinage, with Festus still beginning in A.D. 59.