

# Paul's Coworkers

Meet the people who shared the work and follow their relationships through the biblical references.

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## Barnabas: encouragement with real costs

Barnabas welcomed Paul when others feared him, brought him into ministry at Antioch, and traveled with him. Acts presents his generosity and encouragement alongside serious disagreements, allowing readers to honor his service without treating him as flawless.

### Making room for a former enemy

Acts first introduces Barnabas as Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, who contributes proceeds from a field to the community. Later he speaks for Saul before the apostles when believers fear the former persecutor. This welcome is connected to testimony about Saul's changed life. Barnabas models generosity and discerning advocacy, not uncritical trust in every claim to spiritual transformation.

Acts 4:36-37 · Acts 9:26-30

### Strengthening Antioch and traveling outward

Sent to Antioch, Barnabas recognizes God's grace and encourages perseverance. He seeks Saul in Tarsus and brings him into a sustained season of teaching. The Antioch community then sends them together. Their journey includes both welcome and persecution; at Lystra they reject worship directed toward themselves. The mission calls people to the living God rather than promoting its messengers.

Acts 11:19-26 · Acts 13:1-3 · Acts 14:8-18

### Disagreement without erasing faithfulness

Galatians reports that Barnabas was drawn into the withdrawal from Gentile table fellowship at Antioch. Acts later records his sharp disagreement with Paul about taking John Mark, after which they travel separately. Neither episode should become an invented account of permanent hostility. Their stories invite honest correction and patient development of coworkers, while keeping the gospel larger than any leader's reputation.

Galatians 2:11-14 · Acts 15:36-41

### Biblical references

Acts 4:36-37 · Acts 9:26-30 · Acts 11:19-26 · Acts 13:1-3 · Acts 14:8-18 · Galatians 2:11-14 · Acts 15:36-41

### Sources

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section.

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

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## Silas: encouragement under pressure

Silas was a Jerusalem leader and prophet who accompanied the council's message to Antioch and later traveled with Paul. He is commonly identified with the Silvanus named in Pauline letter openings, though Acts does not explicitly explain the two name forms.

### A trusted voice from Jerusalem

Acts places Silas among the men chosen to accompany the Jerusalem letter to Antioch. He and Judas encourage the believers at length as prophets. Their personal presence helps communicate a communal decision about Gentile inclusion. The message is not reduced to an isolated document: trustworthy people explain, strengthen, and help communities receive its practical implications.

Acts 15:22-35

### Companionship in suffering

Paul chooses Silas after his separation from Barnabas. At Philippi both are beaten and imprisoned; Acts describes their prayer and singing, the earthquake, the jailer's crisis, and the household's response. The narrative also records their Roman citizenship and demand for public acknowledgment. Faith in Christ does not require pretending that official mistreatment is acceptable or that suffering is a mark of personal failure.

Acts 15:40-41 · Acts 16:19-40

### The network behind correspondence

First and Second Thessalonians name Silvanus with Paul and Timothy, while Second Corinthians remembers their joint proclamation. This supports reading the mission as shared work rather than a solitary hero's enterprise. The identification with Silas is common, but a responsible profile distinguishes the naming inference from passages that explicitly name him. Encouragement, travel, and patient presence are substantial ministries in their own right.

1 Thessalonians 1:1 · 2 Thessalonians 1:1 · 2 Corinthians 1:19

### Biblical references

Acts 15:22-35 · Acts 15:40-41 · Acts 16:19-40 · 1 Thessalonians 1:1 · 2 Thessalonians 1:1 · 2 Corinthians 1:19

### Sources

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section.

- The Pauline letters

## Timothy: trusted care across distance

Timothy was a trusted coworker whose journeys helped sustain communities Paul could not personally visit. Paul's letters emphasize his proven service and concern for others, showing that carrying news and strengthening believers were central work in the mission.

### Joining a wider mission

Acts locates Timothy's early involvement at Lystra, where believers commend him to Paul. His mother was Jewish and his father Greek. Paul's decision to circumcise him is narrated in that local missionary setting. Read it alongside the refusal to require circumcision of the Greek Titus: the situations differ, and neither makes circumcision the basis of salvation in Christ.

Acts 16:1-5 · Galatians 2:1-5

### A reliable representative

Paul sends Timothy to strengthen the Thessalonians and receives encouraging news through his return. In Philippians he praises Timothy's sincere concern and tested service. These references show responsibility, relationship, and trust; they do not supply a complete itinerary. Several letters also name Timothy in their opening greetings, reminding readers that Paul's correspondence emerges from a working community.

1 Thessalonians 3:1-10 · Philippians 2:19-24 · 2 Corinthians 1:1

### Learning faithful leadership

The letters addressed to Timothy join teaching, character, and care for the congregation. Traditional Christian reading receives them as Paul's counsel; many modern scholars dispute their direct Pauline authorship. The biographical evidence in the undisputed letters remains significant under either account. Timothy's example directs attention to Christlike concern and demonstrated faithfulness, rather than a leader's visibility or an invented picture of his personality.

1 Timothy 4:12-16 · 2 Timothy 1:5-7 · Philippians 2:20-22

### Biblical references

Acts 16:1-5 · Galatians 2:1-5 · 1 Thessalonians 3:1-10 · Philippians 2:19-24 · 2 Corinthians 1:1 · 1 Timothy 4:12-16 · 2 Timothy 1:5-7 · Philippians 2:20-22

### Sources

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section.

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

- An Introduction to the New Testament

Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Doubleday, 1997), chapters 30–31, “Who Wrote Titus and I Timothy?” and “II Timothy and Possibilities about the Pastorals”.

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## Priscilla and Aquila: work, teaching, and hospitality

Priscilla and Aquila worked alongside Paul, helped instruct Apollos, hosted a church, and risked their lives for Paul. Acts and the letters show their shared ministry across several cities without explaining every move or the occasion of that danger.

### Shared work in Corinth

Acts introduces Aquila, a Jew from Pontus, and his wife Priscilla in Corinth after they had left Italy following Claudius’s order concerning Jews in Rome. Paul stays and works with them because they share a trade. Their workshop belongs to the story of mission: material work, conversation, travel, and hospitality are connected rather than competing parts of Christian service.

Acts 18:1-3

### Helping a gifted teacher grow

In Ephesus the couple hears Apollos and explains God’s way to him more accurately. Acts describes him as eloquent and knowledgeable while still needing instruction. The episode commends patient correction without reducing Apollos to his limitations. It also explicitly portrays both Priscilla and Aquila taking part. The passage does not describe an ordination ceremony or settle every later debate about church offices.

Acts 18:18-28

### Homes opened and lives risked

Paul calls them coworkers in Christ and thanks them for risking their lives, but does not identify the event. Romans and 1 Corinthians mention a church meeting in their home in their respective settings. Their example invites households to become places of welcome and formation. It does not require turning uncertain reconstructions of their travels into a detailed biography.

Romans 16:3-5 · 1 Corinthians 16:19

### Biblical references

Acts 18:1-3 · Acts 18:18-28 · Romans 16:3-5 · 1 Corinthians 16:19

### Sources

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section.

- The Pauline letters

## Lydia: hearing, hospitality, and a new community

Acts describes Lydia as a dealer in purple goods from Thyatira who hears Paul at Philippi, responds to the message, and welcomes the missionaries into her home. Her hospitality becomes part of the emerging Christian community's life.

### A listener beside the river

Paul's group meets women gathered for prayer outside Philippi's gate. Lydia is among them, a worshiper of God whose heart the Lord opens to attend to Paul's message. Acts gives her occupation and city of origin, but does not state her marital status, exact wealth, or complete religious history. Those silences should remain visible in retellings and illustrations.

Acts 16:11-14

### A household opened

After her baptism and that of her household, Lydia urges the travelers to stay with her. The passage portrays faith taking practical form in hospitality. Christians differ over how household baptisms relate to later baptismal practice; the text does not list the household members or their ages. It therefore should not be made to settle that wider question through invented details.

Acts 16:15

### An enduring place of encouragement

When Paul and Silas leave prison, they visit Lydia and encourage the believers before departing. Her home is thus connected with the community's gathering, though Acts does not assign her a precise later office or narrate her subsequent career. Readers can honor her decisive contribution without embellishment. Her story joins God's initiative, attentive hearing, and the generous use of a home for Christ's people.

Acts 16:40 · Philippians 1:3-7

### Biblical references

Acts 16:11-14 · Acts 16:15 · Acts 16:40 · Philippians 1:3-7

### Sources

- The Acts of the Apostles

Acts 7–28; passage references are supplied in each section.

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

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# Titus: Gentile inclusion and difficult reconciliation

Titus appears in Paul's letters as a Greek coworker, a trusted intermediary with Corinth, and a partner in organizing generosity. His uncircumcised status matters in Galatians because Gentiles belong to Christ without first becoming Jews.

## A person within a disputed question

Paul takes Titus to Jerusalem and reports that Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. In Galatians, this personal detail supports the freedom of Gentile believers and the truth of the gospel. The letter's Jerusalem visit has been aligned with different visits in Acts; Titus's role should not be used to make one chronological reconstruction appear certain.

Galatians 2:1-10

## Carrying difficult news

Second Corinthians records Paul's anxiety while waiting for Titus and his relief when Titus brings news of the Corinthians' response. Titus is also involved in the collection for believers in Jerusalem. He is more than a delivery mechanism: Paul commends his concern and partnership. These passages show the emotional labor and accountable administration that accompany church reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 2:12-13 · 2 Corinthians 7:5-16 · 2 Corinthians 8:16-24

## Care, teaching, and integrity

The letter addressed to Titus presents work in Crete, appointment of elders, sound teaching, and practical goodness. Direct Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Letters is disputed in scholarship and defended in traditional evangelical interpretation. That debate should be labeled. Across the material, Christian leadership is accountable to the saving grace of Christ and its fruit in trustworthy conduct, not merely persuasive speech.

Titus 1:5-9 · Titus 2:11-14

## Biblical references

Galatians 2:1-10 · 2 Corinthians 2:12-13 · 2 Corinthians 7:5-16 · 2 Corinthians 8:16-24 · Titus 1:5-9 · Titus 2:11-14

## Sources

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

- Pauline Letters chronology

Pauline Letters chronology: Acts, the letters, dated external anchors, and explicitly qualified reconstructions.

- An Introduction to the New Testament

## Phoebe: service, generosity, and trust

Paul commends Phoebe of Cenchreae to the Roman Christians as a trusted servant or minister and benefactor. Her role as the carrier of Romans is a widely held inference from this commendation, rather than something the letter explicitly states.

### A named member of the mission

Romans 16:1–2 identifies Phoebe with the church at Cenchreae and asks the Roman Christians to welcome and assist her. Paul also acknowledges her help to himself and many others. These details place a woman’s practical service within the network that sustained the mission. They do not give her age, family history, exact resources, or a complete account of her responsibilities.

Romans 16:1-2

### What her titles establish

The Greek term *diakonos* can be translated servant, minister, or deacon. Christians differ over whether this passage identifies a defined church office at this stage. The description of her as a benefactor points to substantial help, without specifying every form it took. Preserve both facts: Paul publicly honors her ministry, and modern office categories cannot simply be read back into a brief commendation.

Romans 16:1-2

### Receiving the person as well as the letter

The opening commendation of Romans 16 makes Phoebe a plausible letter carrier; it does not preserve a delivery itinerary or transcript of her explanation of Romans. Paul’s actual request concerns welcome and assistance. A community shaped by Christ receives unfamiliar believers with practical care, recognizes women’s service, and supports those whose work makes communication and fellowship possible.

Romans 16:1-2 · Romans 15:7

### Biblical references

Romans 16:1-2 · Romans 15:7

### Sources

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

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## Onesimus: received as a brother

Onesimus is the person at the center of Paul's appeal to Philemon and is also named in Colossians. Paul asks for his welcome as a beloved brother. The letters do not establish that he was a fugitive or narrate the final outcome.

## Begin with the appeal

Paul describes Onesimus in deeply personal terms, explains that he has become useful, and says he is sending him back. He offers to take responsibility for any wrong or debt. These statements do not narrate the earlier separation, establish a theft, or identify how Onesimus reached Paul. The familiar runaway-slave storyline is a reconstruction, not an episode directly recounted in Philemon.

Philemon 1:10-19

## Brotherhood within an unequal world

The appeal asks Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul and to recognize him beyond the category of slave, as a beloved brother. This challenges the relationship through kinship in Christ. It does not directly proclaim abolition or report a legal manumission. Reading responsibly acknowledges the violence of slavery and refuses to turn the letter's incomplete social resolution into approval of exploitation.

Philemon 1:15-21

## A connected but incomplete record

Colossians names Onesimus beside Tychicus and describes him as belonging to the recipients' community. Overlapping names connect these letters without proving a single dispatch, equal courier roles, a route, or a prison city. The practical challenge is clear even where the reconstruction remains open: welcome must involve costly recognition of another person's dignity, rather than affectionate language that leaves harmful treatment untouched.

Colossians 4:7-9 · Philemon 1:17-21

## Biblical references

Philemon 1:10-19 · Philemon 1:15-21 · Colossians 4:7-9 · Philemon 1:17-21

## Sources

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

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# Epaphroditus: costly service and honorable return

Epaphroditus brought the Philippians' support to Paul and nearly died while serving. Paul sends him back with public commendation. He is a different person from Epaphras, the coworker associated with Colossae.

## A community's gift in a person's hands

Philippians identifies Epaphroditus as the church's messenger and minister to Paul's need. He carries their gift, so the letter's financial partnership has a human face. Paul's language presents him as brother, coworker, and fellow

soldier. These descriptions honor committed service without supplying an official biography, family background, or exact sequence of travel beyond the letter's information.

Philippians 2:25 · Philippians 4:14-18

## Illness is not failure

Epaphroditus becomes gravely ill and is distressed because the Philippians have heard about it. Paul speaks of God's mercy in his recovery and acknowledges the sorrow his death would have brought. The passage neither shames illness nor treats a worker as expendable. It makes room for vulnerability, concern at a distance, gratitude for recovery, and the real emotional costs of service.

Philippians 2:26-28

## A return marked by honor

Paul asks the church to welcome him joyfully and honor people like him. Returning does not mean his mission was a failure. The example follows the chapter's account of Christ's self-giving and Timothy's concern for others. It invites communities to value quiet, costly work and to care for returning workers. Avoid confusing him with Epaphras or assigning him experiences narrated about that other coworker.

Philippians 2:5-11 · Philippians 2:29-30 · Colossians 1:7

## Biblical references

Philippians 2:25 · Philippians 4:14-18 · Philippians 2:26-28 · Philippians 2:5-11 · Philippians 2:29-30 · Colossians 1:7

## Sources

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

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# Junia: an honored believer and a debated description

Paul honors Junia and Andronicus as fellow prisoners who were in Christ before him. Junia is generally recognized as a woman. Scholars disagree whether Paul includes the pair among the apostles or describes them as well known to the apostles.

## What the greeting gives us

Romans 16:7 places Junia and Andronicus in the early Christian network and remembers their suffering. Paul's kinship language may identify fellow Jews rather than immediate family. The verse does not identify a spouse, narrate their imprisonment, or specify the moment they believed. A short greeting can establish real importance without supporting a complete reconstructed biography.

Romans 16:7

## Two readings of the phrase

Linda Belleville argues from Greek usage and reception history that the phrase includes Junia and Andronicus among notable apostles. Michael Burer and Daniel Wallace defend recognition by the apostles instead. This is distinct from the question of Junia's sex. If the inclusive reading is adopted, the scope of apostle also requires discussion; the verse does not make her one of the Twelve.

Romans 16:7

## Honor without claiming more than the text

Christians debating ministry offices should represent these arguments accurately rather than erase Junia or treat this single verse as a complete church constitution. What remains clear is Paul's public respect for believers whose allegiance to Christ preceded his own and involved suffering. Remembering such people corrects the impression that the mission consisted only of its most famous male figures.

Romans 16:7 · Romans 16:1-16

## Biblical references

Romans 16:7 · Romans 16:1-16

## Sources

- The Pauline letters

Romans through Philemon; passage references are supplied in each section.

- Junia and the apostles: the inclusive reading

Linda Belleville, "A Re-examination of Romans 16.7 in Light of Primary Source Materials," *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 231–249.

- Junia and the apostles: the exclusive reading

Michael H. Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, "Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-examination of Rom 16.7," *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 76–91.

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