

Prologue

Turning Scripture into Story

Throughout this book, Paul’s story develops through his letters and his trips to Jerusalem. They show us the conflicts that drove his actions and the history of his collection. Through them we see how his relationships with apostles James and Peter deteriorated and how conflict plagued his mission from its earliest years.

Year	Trip	Letter	Verses Mentioning Conflict ¹	Verses Mentioning Collection
AD 40	Paul visited the apostles for the first time since his dramatic conversion. Paul told us, almost as an afterthought, that he also met James, the brother of Jesus. As a result of the visit, the apostles sent Paul out for mission work with Barnabas as a mentor. The apostles were understandably wary of this former zealot, and Peter spent fifteen days with him.	as retold in Galatians	2:6–14	2:10
AD 49	Paul returned for an apostolic council (later known as the Jerusalem Council) with Titus in tow. At that point James seemed to have taken over from Peter the leadership of the Jerusalem Church. Although the “false brethren,” as Paul called them, pushed for an invalidation of Paul’s ideas about being free from the Law, in the end they reached an uneasy compromise. Paul was allowed to continue his Gentile mission as long as he promised to bring back a collection from his Gentile converts for “the poor.”	1 Thessalonians “... they displease God and oppose everyone by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved.”	2:14–16	NA

1. See Achtemeier et al., *Introducing the New Testament*, 335.

A Polite Bribe

Year	Trip	Letter	Verses Mentioning Conflict	Verses Mentioning Collection
AD 52		1 Corinthians “Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”	1:11–12 3:4–15 9:1–18	16:1–4
AD 53 (approx.)		Galatians “... if anyone proclaims to you a gospel contrary to what you received, let that one be accursed!”	1:1 1:6–9 2:6–9 2:11–14	2:10
AD 53–54		Philippians “... beware of those who mutilate the flesh!”	3:2–6	NA
AD 56		2 Corinthians “I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles.”	10:12–15 11:4–5 12:16–18	8:20–21 9:1–3, 5
AD 58	Paul returned to Jerusalem accompanied by a group of Gentile converts and bearing the collection.	Romans “Those who eat must not despise those who abstain, and those who abstain must not pass judgment on those who eat... Who are you to pass judgment on servants of another?” “... that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, and that my ministry to Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints...”	14:1–23 As this book will bear out, we can see the whole Letter to the Romans as emanating from conflict.	15:25–27 15:31
After AD 60		Philemon	NA	NA

Dear Theophilus,

Nineteen hundred years ago, you paid a Greek doctor named Luke to write a two-part history of Christianity. The first part told of the life and death of a poor first-century Palestinian Jew called Rabbi Yeshua.

The second part was the Acts of the Apostles, the story of the founding of the Christian church, where he recorded the life of a Jewish convert to Christianity named Saul of Tarsus, the apostle we know as Paul.

Acts of the Apostles ends with Paul's final trip to Jerusalem to reconcile with Jesus's brother, James, at the Temple only to be rejected, spark a riot, and get thrown into prison.

What Luke failed to mention was that Paul arrived in Jerusalem with twenty Gentiles in order to deliver to the Jerusalem Christians a large collection of gold. . . .

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