



Understanding the Footsteps of St Paul

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artist unknown [Tondo with Saint Paul](http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/SNT-paul.jpg), Assisi, Upper Basilica
<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/francis/SNT-paul.jpg>

2 Corinthians 11:25–27

- Three times I was beaten with rods,
- once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked,
- I passed a night and a day on the deep;
- on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers,
- dangers from robbers,
- dangers from my own race,
- dangers from Gentiles,
- dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness,
- dangers at sea,
- dangers among false brothers;
- in toil and hardship, through many sleepless nights,
- through hunger and thirst, through frequent fastings, through cold and exposure.

Understanding Some of the Physical Aspects of St. Paul's Missionary Journeys

- By his catalogue of hardships, the Apostle underlines his dedication to his ministry.
- But for us, too much is left unsaid for the evocative potential of Paul's description to be fully realized.
- Paul's contemporaries could easily have filled in the picture from their own experiences.
- We who travel at great speed and in security and comfort, however, need to transport ourselves consciously to a very different world if we are to appreciate the conditions under which Paul passed a great part of his life, and that contributed to the experiences that became integral to his theology.
- Since Paul himself gives us no details, we must extrapolate; what he encountered would have been similar to what others, who lived a century before or after, experienced.
- Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *On the Road and on the Sea with St. Paul: Travelling conditions in the first century*, *Bible Review*, 1 (1985, 2), p. 41

The Journeys of St Paul

Map from the **Follow the steps of St. Paul tours** www.astoriatravel.gr/en/tours/tours.htm



Paul the Ancient Traveler

- According to several Biblical scholars, St Paul in his missionary journeys traveled between 10,000 and 12,000 miles.
- Most of this was by walking, on mule back, or by ship traveling 1 to 6 miles per hour.
- This presentation will focus on two important aspects of travel in the ancient world.

Challenges to Ancient travel

- Roman roads: their construction and use
- Challenges to ancient travelers on Roman Roads
- Seafaring in the Aegean and Mediterranean Sea
- Challenges to Traveling by Ship

Roman Empire's Roads

Romans built over 53,000 miles (85,000 kilometers) of roads to connect every part of their empire.

The roads were mostly built by the army and were all done by hand.

The Romans had a saying "All roads lead to Rome." The system of roads connected together every province in the empire.

One could start traveling on a Roman road in northwest Africa, travel around the entire Mediterranean sea, end up in Rome and never have left a Roman road.

Map: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_roads The Roman empire in the time of [Hadrian](#) (ruled 117-38 AD), showing the network of main Roman roads. There are many examples of roads that still follow the route of Roman roads.



Construction of Roman Roads

The Roman army built the roads that connected the vast Roman empire. The roads were first surveyed to keep them straight.

Roadbeds were dug three feet to six down and up to twenty three feet across.

It was then filled with large gravel and sand for the foundation.

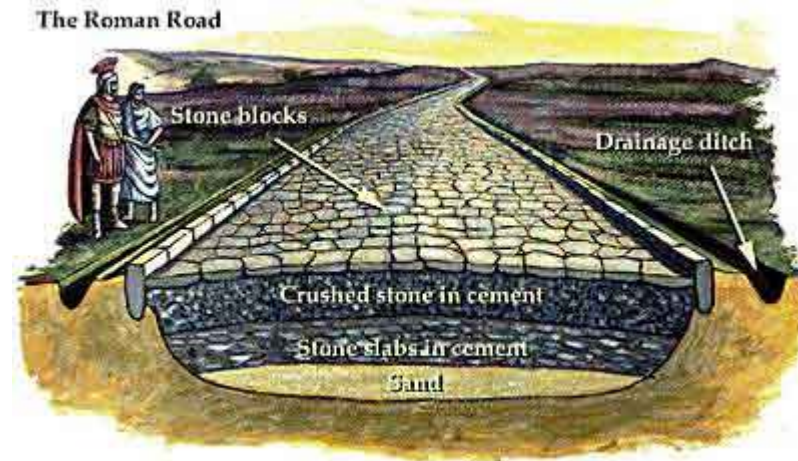
A layer of smaller gravel was placed down and leveled. The sides were lined with blocks and hand-carved stones.

Stones were often pentagonal in shape (five sided) and fitted together to make the top layer of the road.

The roads were sloped from the center so rainwater would drain off into ditches at the sides of the roads.

By layering sand, cement, and stone, they created durable roads that lasted long after the fall of Rome.

Cf. Illustration and commentary from [ushistory.org](http://www.ushistory.org) "The Pax Romana" *Ancient Civilizations Online Textbook*, 2011
<http://www.ushistory.org/civ/6c.asp>



Stone mile markers would be placed along the roads to let travelers know how far to the next city or inn.

A normal days travel was 20 to 22 statute miles.

Those who walked, as Paul did, would have had to extend themselves to cover this distance. It is unlikely that Paul could have maintained such an average for long periods, particularly when the road was hilly.

A donkey could have borne some of his baggage.

In between were inns or posts, which were staging points where animals could be changed.



Challenges to ancient travelers on Roman Roads

- It is obvious that on occasion Paul found himself far from human habitation at nightfall. His skill as a tentmaker would be invaluable.
 - He may have failed to reach shelter because of weather conditions; an unusually hot day may have sapped his endurance; mountain passes may have been blocked by unseasonably early or late snowfalls; spring floods may have made sections of the road impassable; . . . or fierce hailstorms may have forced him to take refuge.
 - The average [elevation] . . . (present day central Turkey) is 3,000 feet above sea-level, but great sections of it rise to double that and extreme variations of temperature are the rule.
 - The mountainous territory through which Paul passed in northern Greece would have been only marginally better.
 - Vulnerability and fear of bandits with little or no protection for any legal system
 - Not all roads in the East were as well constructed or wide as nearer to Rome.
 - Paul could have encountered wild animals like bears, wolves and boars.
- Cf. Jerome Murphy-O'Conner, "On the Road and on the Sea with St Paul: Traveling Conditions in the First Century," *Bible Review* (1985) II, 41+
- Roman roads were so effective that in the later empire they actually became a liability because invading forces could travel along them just as quickly as the Roman armies.

Cf. UNRV History "Roman Roads" <http://www.unrv.com>

Challenges to Traveling by Ship

Several segments of Paul's second missionary journey were by sea. Combining land and sea travel was common in the eastern Mediterranean.

Not unreasonably, the ancients considered sea travel highly risky between March and May and during September and October. Between November and February, however, it was extremely dangerous.

In winter, fog or heavy cloud cover would cut off their navigational guides, easily leading to shipwreck. Therefore, ships usually did not stray far from land. . . . sailors preferred to move from one land sighting to another in daylight.

There were no passenger vessels sailing regular schedules in Paul's day. Cargo ships took passengers on a space available basis.

The ship provided water, but neither food nor services. Passengers were expected to furnish their own provisions, other than water, for the duration of the voyage. They had to cook for themselves, after the crew had been fed.

Passengers had to live on deck; there were no cabins on the average coastal vessel. Apart from a little shade thrown by the mainsail, no shelter was provided. The more experienced travelers brought small tents to protect themselves and their provisions.

The discomfort of a sea voyage was intensified by fear . . . for shipwrecks were common.

. . . [H]is experiences as a lonely traveler almost certainly affected his theology. His own poverty forced him to rub shoulders with the most downtrodden and brutalized elements in society.

Cf. Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *On the Road and on the Sea with St Paul: Traveling Conditions in the First Century*, **Bible Review** (1985) II, 41+

Roman Merchant Vessels

There were a variety of merchant ships used for short and medium-length coastal voyages such as the *corbita* shown with a capacity 70-100 tons.

The hull sides were protected by wales and featured wing-like projections, the housing, which protected the side rudder system.

The cabin was usually situated at the stern and the steersman stood on its rooftop.

The steering system was constituted by side rudders or steering oars, located at the stern quarters.

The maneuver was controlled by a tiller, a bar set perpendicularly to the oar, known as the *clavus*. This ancient rudder worked on the basis of the principle of the lever, which minimized the steersman's effort.

The majority of merchant ships were sailing vessels with one, two or three masts. The sails were square and were regulated by a complex rigging system.

With a favorable wind in a day's travel during daylight equaled 80 miles with an average speed of 4 or 5 knots.

Cf "Merchant vessels and maritime commerce in Roman times"

<http://www2.rgzm.de/navis/Themes/Commercio/CommerceEnglish.htm>



Evidence of the Journeys and the Shipwreck of St Paul

According to Jefferson White, in *Acts*, Paul traveled in the eastern Roman empire over a period of for more than a dozen years.

Acts is astonishingly accurate when recording political, social, and legal details of cities and provinces-some true only in the middle decades of the first century.

A spectacular confirmation is *Acts*' account of Paul's shipwreck dramatically confirmed in detail by meteorological and nautical evidence. There is extraordinary historical accuracy of the narrative:

- High standard of geographical accuracy

- Description of local topography for a number of cities and places with later archeological confirmations.

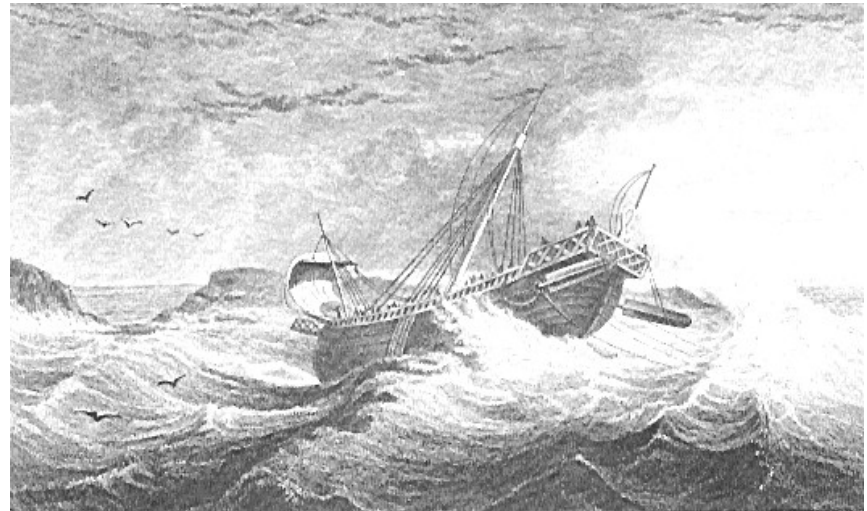
- Details reflect the very different realities in different Roman provinces and cities.

- Reliable portraying of Paul's legal problems.

- Reference to a number of individuals who appear in pagan and Jewish writings.

- Corroboration of Paul's letters.

Art *The Situation of the ship on the fifteen morning* painted by H. Smartly from James Smith *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St Paul* (1880 edition), page 40



What can we learn from greater physical knowledge of the first century travels of St. Paul?

- “ . . . we discover on his [Paul’s] journeys one of the most striking features of his ministry is his own personal physical stamina . . .
- Together with his amazing courageous disregard of his own personal suffering and corporal punishment.
- Who could reject such witness for the cross of Christ, both experienced and *lived* in the example of his Apostle Paul?

Ronald Brownrigg, *Pauline Places: In the Footsteps of Paul through Turkey and Greece*. London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1989, xi

FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT

St Paul the Apostle equates the Christian life with that of an athlete who is disciplined, and trains constantly, so as to win the prize. Our chief aim is to imitate Christ. Use your mind and mouth to honor God. Christians must examine themselves that they are doing no evil but doing what is honorable. We glorify God by obedience—and by sharing the gospel with others. The Apostle Paul teaches that everything that happens to a Christian is for the good—because whatever happens to us, it is for us to be transformed into the image of His Son. If you have received Jesus Christ, walk in Him, that you may become taught, established, rooted, and built up in your faith—abounding in it with thanksgiving. Set your mind on the things above—not the things of this Earth

James Watkins "Seven paintings and etchings of St Paul," <http://james-a-watkins.hubpages.com/hub/St-Paul-the-Apostle>

Artwork: Saint Paul by Michelangelo located in the duomo Siena



Some Contemporary Tours of the Travels of St Paul

- A number of commercial companies operate guided travel tours to selected cities and areas described in the missionary journeys of St Paul.
- One example is the Heil STUDY TOUR of CHRISTIAN SITES in TURKEY May 21 - June 7, 2007 Under the direction of and accompanied by Rev. Dr. John Paul Heil, Professor of New Testament at The Catholic University of America Washington, DC Fr. Heil is a priest of the Archdiocese of St Louis who taught at Kenrick-Glennon Seminary for many years.
- www.enjoyturkey.com/Tours/Interest/Biblicals/Biblical3.htm Missionary Journeys of St Paul Turkey
- tutkutours.com/BIB_02_Pauls_Missionary_journeys.asp [TUTKU TOURS TURKEY - PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS](#)
- [biblicaltours.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=Biblical Tours - Saint Paul's Missionary Journeys in Turkey](http://biblicaltours.com/home/index.php?option=com_content&task=BiblicalTours-SaintPaulsMissionaryJourneysinTurkey)
- Astoria Travel “Follow the steps of St. Paul” tours www.astoriatravel.gr/en/tours/tours.htm
- Faith Journeys myfaithjourneys.com Five separate journeys from 8 to 13 days “walking in the footsteps of St Paul” retracing the footsteps of Paul through Greece and Turkey.

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<http://www.ccel.org/bible/phillips/CN092MAPS1.htm> (Excellent maps and commentary following specific citations from *Acts*.)
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