

# How Many Books of the Bible Did Paul Write?

[Pamela Palmer](#) | Author

2021 8 Sep



Photo credit: Unsplash/Clark Young

The Apostle Paul was a champion of spreading the Gospel message after his radical conversion experience when he encountered Jesus. He traveled to numerous cities and countries, preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul also corresponded with and supported various churches by way of letter. But just how many books of the Bible did Paul write? Thirteen books of the New Testament are attributed to him. The books written by Paul were actually letters he wrote to congregations and fellow brothers and sisters in Christ during his ministry years. Paul began most of his letters with a similar greeting to the one found in the letter to the church of Galatia, “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” ([Galatians 1:3](#)).

The thirteen books written by Paul are: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

## When Did Paul Write These Books?

Paul wrote these thirteen books over the span of his ministry. He wrote to churches and individuals while he was in a variety of circumstances. For example, he wrote while he was on missionary journeys, after completing his travels, or even while he was imprisoned. While staying in Ephesus, Paul wrote to the church of Corinth.

“After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that

you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost” ([1 Corinthians 16:5-8](#)).

Information like that has helped scholars piece together when and where Paul was when he wrote the books attributed to him. In his writings, readers gain a sense of Paul’s deep love and care for the growing Christian church, and the ways he helped people become saved and grow in their [faith](#). Writing letters allowed Paul to continue urging others on in their faith. From another letter, readers learn that Paul wrote a second letter to Timothy from prison.

“For which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!” ([2 Timothy 2:9](#)).

Paul described himself as a prisoner in a letter to Timothy. This letter was written near the end of Paul’s life before he was sentenced to death and executed. Paul wrote these thirteen letters, which have become part of the New Testament, as early as the year 50 AD, and up until his death when he became a martyr for Jesus. Paul is believed to have died sometime around the year 67 AD.

### **Did Paul Write All These Letters Himself?**

From the letters themselves, we know that Paul had help from a scribe to write letters to churches or individuals. This was common practice in Paul’s time. The scribe would have written as Paul spoke out loud what he wanted to include in the letter. In the letter to the Romans, the scribe identified himself.

“I, Tertius, who wrote down this letter, greet you in the Lord” ([Romans 16:22](#)).

It is fascinating that the scribe was also a Christian who wanted to relay his greetings to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. In other letters, such as the one Paul wrote to the church of Colossae, Paul indicated when it was his own hand that wrote the actual words of the letter.

“I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you” ([Colossians 4:18](#)).

Though Paul worked with scribes to create these letters, we have assurance that regardless of how the letter came to be written down that all Scripture is God-breathed (see [2 Timothy 3:16](#)).



Photo credit: Unsplash/Scott Graham

## Why Are Paul's Personal Letters Considered Scripture?

An important part of Paul's ministry was to keep in touch with Christians and churches, to encourage them in their faith and to help them avoid heresy or get persuaded to believe anything other than the true Gospel message that was preached to them. He did this by visiting and writing letters. It remains unclear how many letters outside of the thirteen epistles in the Bible that Paul wrote. However, we do know that Paul wrote letters that did not end up in the Bible. In the first letter to the Corinthians, Paul referenced a previous letter he had written to them.

"I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people" ([1 Corinthians 5:9](#)).

Though we do not know for sure outside of this letter Paul mentioned, it is possible that Paul wrote other letters to churches and individuals that did not become part of the Bible. However, certain letters were highly circulated, transformative, and became recognized by the early church as holy Scripture. These letters are now part of the New Testament.

We know that not every letter Paul wrote became Scripture, such as the letter Paul mentioned that he had formerly written to the church in Corinth. Perhaps this other letter did not have the same level of impact and transferability to congregations beyond Corinth. Ultimately, it remains unknown why this other letter to the Corinthians was not recognized as Scripture. Peter, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, referenced Paul's writings.

"Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction" ([2 Peter 3:15-16](#)).

This is helpful to know that even as Paul's letters were circulating, it was apparent that they were God-breathed. Peter believed that Paul's letters were in fact holy Scripture and urged others to view them in the same light and with the same reverence. It is no surprise, then, that thirteen of Paul's letters became part of the Bible.

## **Is There a Central Theme of Paul's Letters?**

Paul's letters had common elements to them, such as an introduction, the writer's name and who the letter was addressed to, a greeting or thanksgiving, and the body of the letter which conveyed the reason(s) why Paul was writing and the information he wanted to relay to the readers. Paul usually ended his letters with a farewell.

In some of his letters, Paul included lists to demonstrate or expand on what he was teaching. For instance, Paul wrote lists of sinful behaviors (see [Galatians 5:19-21](#) or [Colossians 3:5-6](#)), lists of the fruit of the Spirit (see [Galatians 5:22-23](#) or [Ephesians 4:2](#)), lists of descriptions (see [1 Corinthians 13:4-8](#)), or how Christians should live (see [2 Corinthians 6:4-10](#)).

Paul's letters address many themes and topics, such as marriage, Christian living, sinfulness, righteousness, and grace. Paul wrote about suffering, joy, discipleship, forgiveness, and that Jesus was coming back. Other themes Paul addressed were unity in the body of Christ, dying to the flesh, and the power of the Holy Spirit. Central to all Paul's letters is the overarching theme that we are saved by faith in Jesus.

“For [by grace you have been saved](#) through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God” ([Ephesians 2:8](#)).

Paul went to great lengths to declare that Jesus is the Lord and Savior, the promised Messiah, to the Gentiles and the Jews alike. Paul originally rejected the Gospel, persecuted the church, and believed Jesus to be an imposter. When he experienced a conversion, Paul undoubtedly made it his mission to follow the call of Jesus to go and make disciples of all nations. Paul had a passion to make sure that every person knew that one cannot earn salvation, rather it is a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ alone.



Photo credit: ©Getty Images/Tinnakorn Jorruang

## What Happened to Paul?

During his Christian life, Paul went on missionary journeys, empowered other believers to have faith, rejected heresies and preached the truth of God. Paul corresponded with churches and individuals and wrote letters that eventually were recognized as part of the Holy Bible. In his final years, he was imprisoned in Rome and was sentenced to death. He was a great supporter of many fellow brothers and sisters in Christ and believed that God was with him no matter what he faced (See [Romans 8:38-39](#)).

“The time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing” ([2 Timothy 4:6-8](#)).

Even near the end of his life as he faced death, Paul fully trusted that God was with him and that it had been an honor to serve God. Paul died a martyr for Jesus, one who helped advance the growing Christian church and ultimately, the kingdom of God.

## A Life Devoted to Christ

Paul wrote numerous letters to churches and individuals during his ministry. Though some were just that – personal or communal letters – others were recognized as Scripture and became part of the Bible. Thirteen books in total are attributed to Paul in the New Testament. Paul wrote about many theological issues and did his best to encourage his audiences to persevere in faith.

Paul’s passion for Jesus and his love for people is evident in both his writings and that he gave his life to advance the Gospel so that more and more would come to know Jesus as their Lord and Savior.

## Related articles

[What Do We Know about Paul before His Conversion?](#)

[5 Valuable Lessons from Paul on the Benefits of Giving](#)  
[6 Things You Didn't Know about Paul in the Bible](#)