

O Father, Thou Whose Love Profound

Edward Cooper (1770–1833)

O Father, Thou whose love profound
a ransom for our souls hath found,
before Thy throne we sinners bend;
to us Thy pard'ning love extend.

Almighty Son, Incarnate Word,
our Prophet, Priest, Redeemer, Lord,
before Thy throne we sinners bend;
to us Thy saving grace extend.

Eternal Spirit, by whose breath
the soul is raised from sin and death,
before Thy throne we sinners bend;
to us Thy quick'ning pow'r extend.

Jehovah! Father, Spirit, Son,
mysterious Godhead, Three in One,
before Thy throne we sinners bend;
grace, pardon, life, to us extend.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

Paul's Missionary Entourage

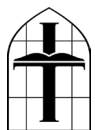
Kevin T. Bauder

In the beginning, Paul's missionary strategy was assigned by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:1–3), who specifically directed the church at Antioch to commission both Barnabas and Saul. Later, the chapter intimates that Barnabas was not Paul's only companion. At minimum, Paul and Barnabas were accompanied by John Mark, who abandoned them in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13; 15:38). This incident would later precipitate a separation between Paul and Barnabas, when the latter wished to reinstitute Mark as a companion (Acts 15:37–39).

Although he worked separately from Barnabas after the split, Paul did not choose to travel alone. Rather, he recruited Silas, who had been one of the messengers sent out by the Jerusalem church to Antioch (Acts 15:25–26, 32–34, 40). In other words, Paul's team now included members from two different churches: Antioch and Jerusalem. Paul soon added another member, Timothy, who was a native of either Lystra or Derbe (Acts 16:1–3). Other texts state that Timothy had been schooled in the Scriptures from a very early age (2 Tim 3:15).

The Bible does not mention any other people traveling with Paul at this point, but there may have been. The biblical writers hardly ever felt compelled to include every detail in their narratives. Clearly, however, another member was added to Paul's company in Troas, where the text of Acts shifts from third-person plurals to first-person plurals (Acts 16:10). The implication is that Luke, the author of Acts, joined the group at Troas.

The next information about other companions of Paul comes in Ephesus, on Paul's third missionary journey. During a riot in Ephesus, the mob seized Gaius and Aristarchus, whom the text identifies as Macedonian men who traveled with Paul (Acts 19:29). After the riot, Paul fled temporarily to Macedonia (Acts 20:1–5), and when he returned to Asia he was accompanied by Sopater (from Berea), Aristarchus and Secundus (from Thessalonica), Gaius (from Derbe), Timothy (from Derbe or Lystra), and Tychicus and Trophimus (both from Asia). Trophimus, whom the text also identifies as an Ephesian, later accompanied Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 21:29). The text does not specify how many others may also have traveled there with Paul.



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The book of Acts certainly has plenty to say about the people who accompanied Paul on his missionary journeys. Paul's epistles also contribute to this topic. One source of information is the salutation of 1 Corinthians, which identifies Sosthenes as a co-author of the epistle with Paul. The name *Sosthenes* was common, so identifying him with the ruler of the synagogue who was beaten in Corinth (Acts 18:17) would be presumptuous.

The closing statements of 1 Corinthians imply that the church had sent messengers to Paul with a gift of some sort (1 Cor 16:17). These messengers included Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus. Even if they did not remain long with Paul, they would have been included in his entourage at least temporarily.

According to 2 Corinthians 8:16–24, Titus also traveled with Paul. In fact, Paul used Titus as a messenger. Another person traveling with Paul was an unnamed brother who was chosen by the churches in the interest of financial accountability. Paul also mentions at least one other unnamed brother who was a messenger of the churches.

Timothy is mentioned as a companion of Paul in several of the epistles (2 Cor 1:1, 19; Phil 1:1; 2:19; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Silas or Silvanus is also included in the greeting of each Thessalonian epistle. Writing to Philemon, Paul extends greetings from Epaphras, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (Phlm 23–24). Writing to Titus, Paul mentions Artemas and Tychicus as individuals whom he can dispatch at will (3:12).

Two other texts are of special interest. One is the list of closing greetings in Colossians 4:7 and following. There Paul mentions Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, Jesus Justus, Luke, and Demas. He also indicates that Epaphras, a member of the Colossian congregation, had joined his entourage at least temporarily.

The other important list is in 2 Timothy 4, especially verses 9 and 20. In this passage Paul lists only Luke as his present companion. But he mentions others who *had been* with him and, for various reasons, no longer were. The only person Paul names in a specifically negative light is Demas. Paul's other companions seem to have been dispatched to various places for various reasons: Erastus, Crescens, Titus, Luke, Mark, and Tychicus. Paul also states that he had left Trophimus behind because he was sick.

These texts, taken together, clearly imply that Paul's preferred method was to travel and minister in company with others. At times, his entourage must have been rather large. Literally dozens of people are mentioned as having joined him for at least some part of his ministry. Evidently, the only place where Paul ended up alone was Athens, and even there he commanded his helpers to join him as quickly as possible (Acts 17:15).

This raw data is interesting, but even more interesting are the hints that the text offers about how these people actually worked together. That is the angle that I would like to pursue in the next essay.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
