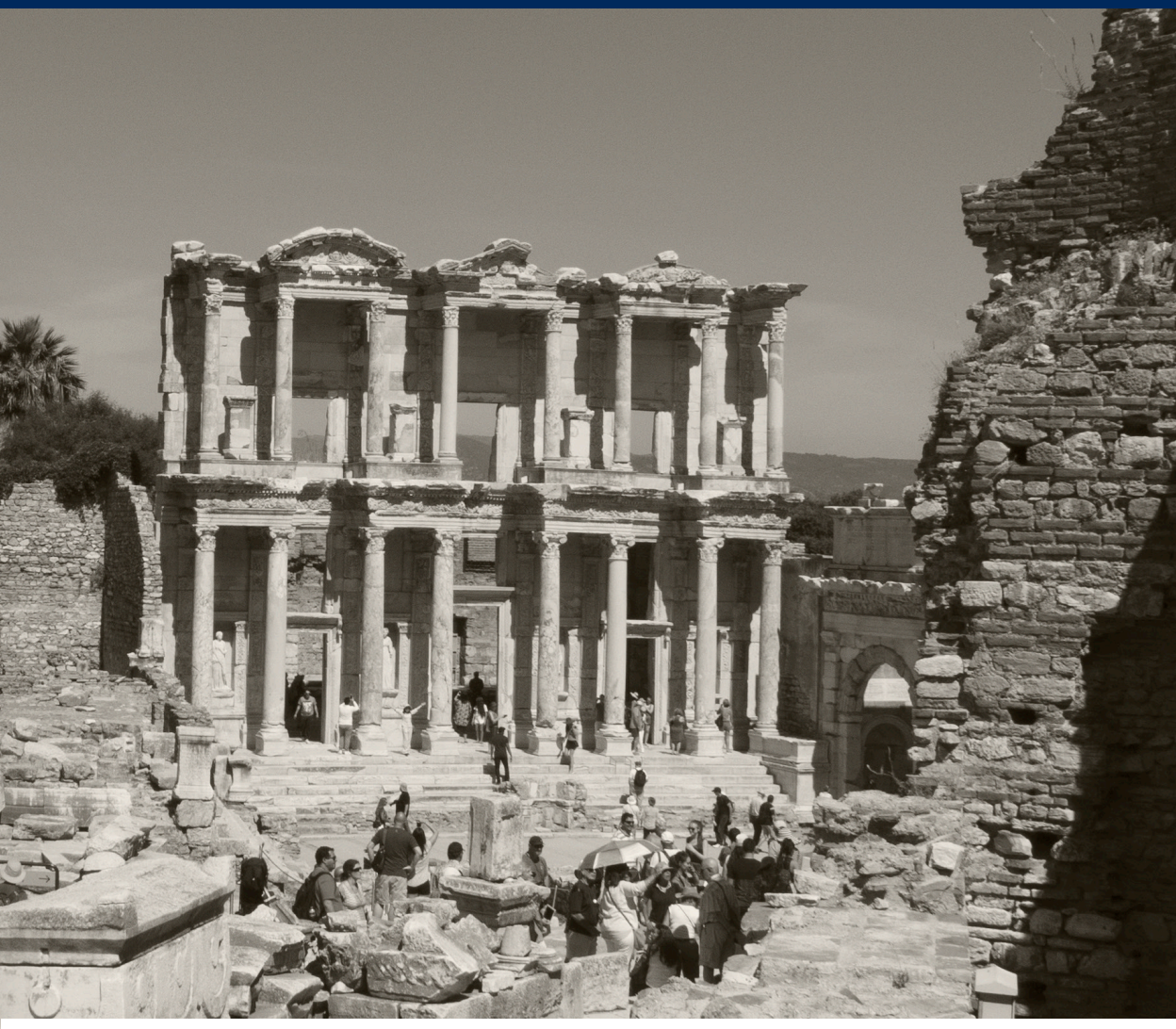
Faith, Work, and Economics



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The Business Secrets of Paul of Tarsus[1]

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"Or is it only Barnabas and I who lack the right to not work for a living?"
1 Corinthians 9:6 (NIV)

Paul's ironic defense of his self-funded ministry highlights an often-neglected aspect of his Christian mission: his success in business and how that effected his ministry. Of course, "tentmaking" has become proverbial for conducting Christian ministry under the cover of business ventures, to which numerous titles in a Christian bookstore can testify.[3] However, too often the term has simply become a metaphor, ignoring the first century reality that underlies the concept. In what follows, we will examine the first century business world of Paul and speculate on ways the lessons he may have learned though his life as a businessman may have shaped his missionary efforts.

First Century Context

Luke reports that Paul was a tentmaker, or more generally, a worker in leather (Acts 18:3).[4] Cameron Hawkins, in a recent discussion of manufacturing in the Roman world, highlights the importance of professional guilds, or *collegia*; "Professional associations—known by a range of terms in antiquity, and generally referred to as professional collegia in modern scholarship—are the most visible networks to which artisans and manufacturers belonged in the Roman world . . . professional associations in particular were similar enough in structure to private-order enforcement networks that they likely functioned as such in practice."[5] Inscriptional evidence gives us

[1]This title consciously (and ironically) echoes a large sub-genre of business self-help books; my personal favorite is *The Leadership Secrets of Attila the Hun* by Wes Roberts (New York: Warner, 1989).

[2]I am an archaeologist, not a New Testament scholar; however, like Paul I too have lived a life of business as mission, working for 20 years in the secular world before coming to teach at Southwestern Seminary.

[3]See, Patrick Lai, *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Missions* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006); or Toby Miles, *7 Reasons Tentmaking Businesses Fail and How to Overcome Them: Lessons Learned in Business as Mission* (Amazon Digital, 2013).

[4]"Tentmaker" is the translation of the Greek term ***σκηνοποιός***; a leatherworker is more properly termed a ***σκυτοτόμος***.

[5]Cameron Hawkins, "Manufacturing," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman*

some insight into how tentmaking and leatherworking were carried out in the Roman world. An inscription from Colossae attests to a local Colossian leatherworking industry, probably organized by a collegia.[6] Following this understanding, a plausible reconstruction of the relationship of tentmaking to leatherworking can be proposed. This appears to be the situation in Rome.[7] In this model, a tentmaker is a sub-discipline of "leatherworker" (i.e. a tentmaker is a member of a leatherworking collegia). Other sub-disciplines in a leatherworking collegia would be tanners, cobblers, and the makers of horse furniture, although no exact internal structure is documented for leatherworking collegia.

Inscriptional evidence indicates that professional guilds were a common presence in first century cities, particularly port cities such as Ostia, where guilds were involved in all aspects of the grain trade.[8] Guilds allowed free competition amongst their members, but there were significant benefits to membership. As the economic historian Peter Temin points out, "the strong organization of the guild and its ability to exert collective action made guild membership desirable."[9] Guilds could have patrons who could provide social benefits as well as access to customers. The fundamental benefit may have been the guarantee of the trustworthiness of the professional who was in a guild. A funerary inscription from Rome identifies the deceased as a high office holder in the *collegium fabrorum tignuariorum,* a builders collegium. This man served as a judge in the association, probably arbitrating professional misconduct.[10] A customer would be more likely to patronize an artisan who had guild backing.

Membership was not a hereditary right, but sons often followed fathers into the same guilds. It is interesting to speculate whether Paul was following his father's trade. Of course this was the expected Jewish pattern as well, most famously exemplified by Jesus. Paul also inherited Roman citizenship from his father (Acts 22:26–28). Paul would have had three names as a Roman citizen—a forename, (*praenomen*), a family name (*nomen gentile*) and a personal name (*cognomen*). We only have his personal name Paullus. Intriguingly, Paul never claims to be a Roman citizen in his own writings. However, Paul uses his Roman name exclusively in his letters and there is no reason to doubt that the citizenship claim was accurate. By the time of Paul's birth, well-placed provincials could become Roman citizens.[11] How a previous generation of the family acquired this status we do not know. As

Economy, edited by Walter Scheidel (London: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 175–96.

[6]Allan H. Cadwallader, "A New Inscription, a Correction and a Confirmed Sighting from Colossae," *Epigraphica Anatolica* 40 (2007): 109–18.

7Inscriptions indicate a tentmaker association in Rome. (CIL 6.518b, 9053, 9053a).

[8]Russell Meiggs, *Roman Ostia* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 316.

[9]Peter Temin, *The Roman Market Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 109.

[10]Hawkins, "Manufacturing," 192.

[11]A.N. Sherwin-White, (1973) *The Roman Citizenship*, 2nd ed. (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1973).

F.F. Bruce suggests, it may have been that the tentmaking firm, (assuming that was the trade of Paul's family), had been helping one of the civil war generals who had the authority to grant citizenship, such as Anthony.[12]

The history of Paul's hometown, Tarsus, provided numerous opportunities for a tentmaker to meet a Roman general. Paul is an urban man.[13] He reflects an urban self-understanding when he tells the arresting Roman officer in Acts 21 that he is from "Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city" (Acts 21:39, my translation). He has the urban pride of the Levantine world where one's city was more important than one's province or kingdom. Tarsus is the principal city of the territory of East Cilica and is about ten miles inland from the sea and thirty miles south of the famed Cilician Gates. The natural advantages of the site have insured an almost continuous occupation from the Neolithic to the present. "As for Tarsus," writes the first century geographer Strabo, "it lies on a plain, founded by Argives wandering in search of Io. The Cyndus River flows through the middle, past the gymnasium of the young men. Because the source of the river is not far off, and flows through a deep ravine before it falls into the city, the current is both cold and fast, and soothes the swollen nerves of men and livestock in its current."[14]

The strategic location naturally attracted the interest of the expanding Roman Empire, which became the ruler in 67 B.C. when the Roman general Pompey made the city the capital of the newly acquired territory of Cilicia after he defeated the pirates based there. Cicero lived in Tarsus when he was proconsul of Cilicia in 51–50 B.C. Its strategic location meant that the city gathered the attention of the competitors during the Roman Civil Wars of the Late Republic. Julius Caesar visited here and Mark Anthony famously met Cleopatra at Tarsus in 41 B.C.[15] Any one of the Late Republican generals could have needed the services of a tentmaker to house their troops. Anthony's conqueror, Augustus, took a personal interest in the city, sending his tutor, Athenodorus, to govern the city. Strabo describes the city as a cultural and educational center with "all kinds of schools of rhetoric"[16] and it has been aptly described by one modern Pauline scholar as "a university city."[17]

We know very little about the physical world of first century Tarsus. Hetty Goldman of Bryn Mawr College carried out a series of excavations on the fringe of the modern city before and after World War II, but very limited material was recovered from the Roman period.[18] The recent excavation of

[12]F.F. Bruce, *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 37.

[13]Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

[14]Strabo, *Geography*. 14.5.12, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1932), my translation.

[15]Plutarch, *Lives*, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1920).

[16]Strabo, *Geography*, 14.5.12.

[17]Bruce, *Paul*, 35.

[18]Hetty Goldman, ed., *Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus. Vol I: The Hellenistic and*

an underground parking garage has turned into a research excavation in downtown Tarsus. The Republic Square Excavations are under the leadership of Professor Levent Zoroglu of Selcuk University in Konya. Reported discoveries from the first century include shops and a basalt-paved street.[19]

Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, probably on the main Roman road running east of the Jordan River, linking Philadelphia (modern Amman) to Gerasa (Jerash) and Damascus. This would have been the most attractive route from Jerusalem to Damascus for a devout Jew who wished to avoid encounters with any Samaritans. With the support of the High Priest, Paul (then still known as Saul) sets out to Damascus in pursuit of the scattering followers of Jesus, known as the followers of "the Way" (Acts 9:1–2). First century Damascus hosted a major Jewish community. Josephus reports that more than 10,000 Jews were killed in the city in immediate reprisals after the beginning of the first revolt in Judea.[20] Despite the large community of Jews, Paul was relatively safe from direct action by the Jewish High Priest, since the Nabateans governed the city.[21] However, his conversion would have created an immediate economic hardship for Paul. He came to Damascus with letters of authority from the chief priest in Jerusalem (Acts 22:5). These letters probably functioned not only as letters of introduction to the Jewish community but, more importantly, they could have functioned as letters of credit for Paul that he could use to draw on resources of the local Jewish community for his upkeep. Obviously, after his conversion this potential source of support was gone. It is possible that Ananias and his fellow believers supported Paul initially, but if he stayed in Damascus and the region for as long as three years, he probably worked for his own support. This was his pattern throughout his later career and it is likely that he pursued the same course here.

Economic pressure is the simplest explanation for why the Apostle goes to Arabia (Gal 1:17).[22] Roman Arabia included parts of modern Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Sinai, but in the first century, the term Arabia primarily refers to the Nabatean Kingdom, headquartered in Petra.[23] The Romans did not annex the Nabatean kingdom until A.D. 106. The Nabateans established extensive settlements in the Negev, southern Jordan, and northwest Saudi Arabia, and controlled trade routes all the way to the Indian Ocean including

Roman Periods (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950).

[19]L. Zoroğlu, "Tarsus Cumhuriyet Alanı 1995 Yılı Kazısı," *Kazı Sonuçları Toplantısı* XVIII (1996): 401–08.

[20]Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, 2.20.2, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1927).

[21]As 2 Corinthians 11:32 makes clear, the account in Acts 9 identifies Jews as the main protagonists, but the governance of the city was in the hands of the Nabateans.

[22]Luke ignores the Arabian trip and reports that Saul goes into the synagogues of Damascus and starts teaching about Jesus as Messiah. Luke's choice in Acts 9 is to emphasize the immediate outreach of the new convert. There is no contradiction here since the account in Galatians indicates Paul did return to Damascus, in keeping with the Acts narrative.

[23]G.W. Bowersock, *Roman Arabia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983).

the lucrative trade in frankincense and myrrh from southern Arabia.[24] It is certainly possible that they supplied the Magi with their gifts for the child Jesus. They also controlled the trade links between Rome and the Parthian Empire located in Persia. By the first century A.D. they may have been the middlemen in the silk trade between China and Rome.

It is probable that Paul went to Petra, the Nabatean capital. Petra is one of the great archaeological sites of the world. King Aretas IV, (9 B.C.–A.D. 40) greatly expanded the city and the basic urban infrastructure, visible today, dates from the time of Paul. The Nabateans were brilliant hydraulic engineers and this skill enabled them to thrive in a hostile environment. The most visible expression of the wealth of the city is the magnificent series of rock-cut tombs, which line the ceremonial entrance into the city, the famously narrow Siq. Large carvings of camel caravans show that the Nabateans understood the source of their wealth. King Aretas was popular with his subjects and he was entitled "He who loves people."[25] The magnificent tomb, the so-called "Treasury" that dominates the ceremonial entrance into Petra, may belong to Aretas IV.[26]

Paul would have wanted to establish his credentials with the Nabatean government, both economically and politically. He needed to demonstrate that he was capable of supporting himself economically, thereby not being a drain on the royal treasury. More importantly, Paul needed to convince the Nabatean government that he was no longer an emissary of the high priest and therefore not a potential security threat. Aretas held an antagonistic approach to Jewish authority, warring with Herod Antipas after the Jewish king had divorced his wife (Aretas' daughter) to marry Herodias.[27] The Nabatean king also was very likely wary of any infiltration or influence from Judea proper since the Romans were threatening an invasion of his kingdom from Judea during the time Paul was in Arabia. Since the Romans directly ruled Judea, any contact from the high priest in Jerusalem would be treated with suspicion. This atmosphere of wariness probably helped to ensure Paul's safety after he converted to Christianity.

Economics may also have played a part in Paul's return to Damascus from Arabia. Damascus, a major commercial center, would have been an excellent place for his trade.[28] The raw material for his tents would be easily obtainable from the eastern steppe lands that have supported nomadic herders from the Neolithic onwards, and the passing trade caravans would be a likely market for Paul's products. He probably rented a spot on one of the colonnaded markets in Damascus.

[24]Avraham Negev, *Nabatean Archaeology Today* (New York: New York University Press, 1986).

[25]Julius Euting, *Nabatäische Inschriften* (Berlin: Reimer, 1885), 85.

[26]Iain Browning, *Petra* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1973).

[27]Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities*, 18, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 109–18.

[28]Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Political tensions may help to explain why Aretas eventually orders Paul's arrest in Damascus. According to Luke, "after many days . . . the Jews" form a conspiracy to kill Paul. In 2 Corinthians Paul tells his version of the story and blames the agents of Aretas for the threat, perhaps after Paul had been denounced as a provocateur by the Jewish leadership in the city (Acts 9, 2 Cor 11:32). If the agents of Aretas were quietly watching Paul, then the religious conflict in the Damascene Jewish community generated by Paul's conversion may have appeared to be political in nature to the pagan Nabateans. Of crucial importance is what is *not* said by either Luke or Paul: neither Luke in Acts nor Paul in his letters make any mention of gentile-mission work that Paul might have undertaken during this period. His proselytizing appears to have been confined to the Jewish community of Damascus and possibly Arabia. Paul may have visited the city again during his years "in Syria," (Gal 1:21) but the Christian community here does not figure in his later ministry nor is it mentioned in his letters except in relation to his conversion. If he did reach out to gentiles in Arabia and Damascus the results have gone unrecorded. It is even possible that it was through his mercantile activity that he caused offense to the Nabatean government, resulting in the order for his arrest.

Pauline Business Principle Number 1: Learn Your Trade

After his dramatic escape in a basket, Paul leaves Damascus and returns home to Tarsus. In many ways he has few options. He is no longer welcome in Damascus or, by extension, the Nabatean kingdom; nor is he safe or welcome in Jerusalem (Acts 9).[29] I think his return home is essentially a business decision. He needs to earn a living while he studies and grows in his new faith. As a Roman citizen, he also needs to pay his taxes. Non-landowners paid a poll tax; urbanites paid taxes on their properties and on their wages. His family connections may have provided him with easier access to guild membership, which would allow him freedom to establish and grow his business. His extended family (if he had them) may even have provided him with free lodging and free labor in his shop, at least until his business was established.[30]

Tarsus was a strong commercial center. The strategic roadway nexus of the Cilician Gates offered the merchants of Tarsus many opportunities for commercial success. They would have had easy access to the central Anatolian plain to the north and west, and to the major markets of Antioch and the Syrian cities to the south. The fertile plain of the Cyndus River

[29]Paul was not fully trusted by the Jerusalem leadership. Their wariness was not from a lack of faith, but a well-earned respect for the powers arrayed against them. Paul could have been a "deep cover" agent living a lie to better destroy the new faith.

[30]All we know of Paul's family is that he had a sister and a nephew; however, by A.D. 60, at least the nephew lived in Jerusalem (Acts 23:16). He appears to have been still loyal to Paul, although we do not know if he had become a believer.

provided numerous products for export including flax and a local product called cilicium made from goat hair. In the eastern Roman Empire, a "tentmaker" would of necessity have had to deal with cloth as well, because only the Roman military would have used leather for tents in such a warm environment. This would have widened the potential customer base for Paul and opened up new possibilities when he established himself in business. For a tentmaker from Tarsus, marketing a luxury product like cilicium may have looked like a winning formula. For the next decade, Paul made Tarsus his base and his survival demonstrates that he was at least minimally successful as a businessman.

After ten years, Paul's foundational time is over when Barnabas goes to bring the apostle to help minister to the burgeoning church in the metropolis of Antioch-on-the-Orontes, in Syria. Barnabas was himself a businessman and had known Paul from his first visit to Jerusalem where Barnabas appears to have been the initial person to place trust in the new convert (Acts 9:27). Barnabas was a businessman and a property owner although we do not know his trade (Acts 4:37). Antioch's prime mercantile location at a nexus of trade routes was an obvious advantage for Paul. There is a considerable body of evidence for local merchants engaged in overseas trade under the Romans.[31] From a base here, Paul could easily have traveled throughout Syria and along the Levantine coast trading and making contacts. Antioch and Tarsus lay within the same market region being directly linked by road and sea routes, so this was a familiar world for Paul. If he had already established a network of clients while he was based in Tarsus, his clientele could easily have included contacts in Antioch. The wealthy Jewish community would have provided a strong potential market for Paul, easily accessible due to his shared cultural identity, particularly, since at least initially, they would have had no reason to be suspicious of him. The presence of a Roman army base in the city also provided another potential local market for Paul's leather goods and tents. Armies need tents and a Roman century, the basic unit of the Roman army, would need ten to twelve tents;[32] if Paul's citizenship derived from his father's or grandfather's service to the Roman army, then Paul would have been well aware of the specific requirements of Roman tents and thus able to quickly provide product for the army.

Pauline Business Principle Number 2: A Team is More Effective than an Individual

Paul appears to enjoy success when he works with partners, both as direct associates, and as investors. It may be no coincidence that his first mission partner is another businessman: Barnabas, a Jewish Christian from Salamis in Cyprus, who accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey

[31]Alan K. Bowman, ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History, Volume 10: The Augustan Empire, 43 BC–AD 69*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 723.

[32]Pat Southern, *The Roman Army: A Social and Institutional History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

which saw the birth of the Gentile mission (Acts 13:4). Salamis was a major commercial center, closely linked with Antioch in Syria.[33]

In Philippi, Paul meets another successful entrepreneur: Lydia, a wealthy woman from Thyatira in Asia Minor who is a dealer in Tyrian purple dye (Acts 16:14–15). Being from Thyatira, Lydia may have been connected to a more eastern oriented commercial network than most of her fellow merchants in Philippi. One of the main attractants for an outsider seeking to set up business in Macedonia was the Via Egnatia, a major roadway built to link the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean. A bilingual milestone found near Thessalonica informs us that Gnaeus Egnatius, the proconsul of Macedonia, ordered its construction.[34] The road connected the main cities of Macedonia. By Paul's day it reached Neapolis (modern Kavalla) where Paul and his companions first landed in Macedonia. The main construction force was probably the Roman army, since the road provided a vital strategic route across Macedonia.

Recent archaeological study of the Via Egnatia has given us a better understanding of the typical embellishments of a major Roman road.[35] The road was approximately six meters wide, paved with flat stones, and equipped with curbs and rains to regulate runoff. The roadway had a well-drained foundation (agger and rudus) of smaller stones and gravel placed on bedrock where possible, which supported the paving stones. Commercial inns occurred approximately every 30–35 miles, interspersed with official posting stations where horses could be changed with the appropriate permissions, insuring a swift passage for official couriers. Small garrisons placed with easy access to the roadway protected travelers and couriers. The road was well maintained and continued in importance after the first century.

The excellent road connections made Philippi a viable base for a commercial operation such as that run by Lydia, Paul's convert who imported purple dye from the east (probably Phoenicia). In 30 B.C., following his own victory against Anthony, Augustus re-founded the city as Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensium and its status as an Augustan colony exempted the city from significant forms of taxation and gave it additional privileges of land ownership.[36] The colonists had the full legal status of citizens of Italy. The legal and judicial systems were Roman, and Latin was the official language of civic administration. The Roman ethos of the colony is evident in Philippi's Latin civic inscriptions and in the worship of Roman gods. According to

[33]Thomas W. Davis, "Saint Paul on Cyprus: The Transformation of an Apostle," in *Do Historical Matters Matter to Faith? A Critical Appraisal of Modern and Postmodern Approaches to Scripture*, edited by J.K. Hoffmeir and D.R. Magary (Wheaton: Crossway, 2012), 405–23.

[34]G.H.R. Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 81.

[35]M.G. Amore, L. Bejko, Y. Cerova, and I Gjipali. (2005) "Archaeological Reports and Notes—Via Egnatia (Albania) Project: Results of Fieldwork 2002," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 336.

[36]Charalambos Bakirtzis and Helmut Koestler, eds. *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after his Death* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1998).

a recent study, of the 421 inscriptions recovered from Philippi, only 60 are Greek. [37] Lydia, and other non-local merchants, may have been successful because they had better contacts across the Aegean than the more western oriented descendants of the Roman colonists and so could provide exotic products more easily. Her outsider status may have led Lydia to be more socially isolated in Philippi, which may have contributed to her openness to the gospel message. She causes her entire household to be baptized, although we are not told if this included immediate family members or not. In this way, she would have an immediate "congregation" of fellow worshippers in her own house.

As a dealer in purple dye Lydia must have access to capital to conduct her business. That she is wealthy is evidenced by the fact she has a large house in Philippi capable of hosting guests. Acts 16:40 records that Paul and Silas met with "the brothers" (i.e. the believers, both men and women) at Lydia's house. As a successful merchant, Lydia would most likely have had a spacious upper-class house able to accommodate the entire membership of the young church. She is Paul's first convert in Europe and hosts him during his stay in the city. A clearly forceful woman, she is able to persuade Paul to stay in her house despite his initial reluctance.

Essentially, she becomes Paul's patron. A patron describes a very specific social/economic role in the Roman world.[38] The patron/client relationship, although private, had clear expectations for both parties. Operated from the household of the patron, the relationship existed to promote the political and social ambitions of the patron by expanding his power base through the acquisition of clients. Clients were free Roman citizens with a vote, who attached themselves to an elite patron to gain financial and social support. Anybody can buy slaves; you need free clients to gain prestige. The first century B.C. writer Vitruvius notes that the house of a patron needed expansive public spaces such as receiving vestibules and well-proportioned atria, (and additional household staff) to accommodate the clients who would appear at dawn to greet their patron.[39] The clients were expected to form an escort and accompany the patron throughout the day, wherever his business took him. Their visible presence at law courts and business establishments reinforced the status of their patron and reminded observers that the patron was an individual to be reckoned with. It would be difficult for a client to maintain his own business, since the patron dictated his schedule. In return for his time, a patron would financially support his clients and often feed them at his house at the end of the day. The members of the church in Thessalonica who are "walking in idleness" (2 Thess 3:6) are probably clients parasitically waiting on patrons. Christian patrons, such as Lydia, turn this power game upside

[37]Barbara Levick, (1967) *Roman Colonies in Southern Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967).

[38]Richard P. Saller, R. *Personal Patronage under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[39]Vitruvius, *On Architecture* 6, 5.1–2, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1970).

down. In the church, the clients do not serve the patron, rather the patron acts as a servant to the clients. The Christian patron opened his or her house to the church, and supported the church financially. In return, the Christian patron gained eternal "status" in the eyes of God.

It appears that Lydia and the church in Philippi act as financial patrons to Paul throughout his later ministry (Phil 4:15). When Paul gets to Thessalonica he is able to set up quite quickly in business because the church in Philippi apparently provided him with the necessary "seed money" to get started. Even if he carried his own tools with him, he would have needed capital to rent a shop and purchase raw materials. "Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again," says Paul in Philippians 4:16. This ability to give financial support reflects the financial strength, and by implication, the high social standing, of some of the membership of the Christian community in Philippi. If the church in Philippi is generously supporting Paul than almost certainly Lydia is a major financial contributor. It may be that this repeated financial support of Paul is the product of Lydia's newly baptized understanding of what a Christian patron does.

Paul also had business partners in addition to financial patrons. He reminds the Thessalonians that "we worked night and day" in his shop (1 Thess 2:9). By using the plural "we," Paul makes clear that his co-authors, Timothy and Silas, also worked in the shop with him. This would have been a good model of Gentile/Jewish cooperation for Thessalonian believers and may have been part of the reason the Jews in the city were upset with him. This passage also tells us that for Paul, his work is part of his ministry. In 1 Thessalonians 3:10 he reminds his audience that he prayed "night and day," neatly reversing the order from 1 Thessalonians 1:9. When both passage are seen together, it is right to conclude that Paul prays when he works, and works when he prays.

Thessalonica possessed a fine natural harbor and its placement on key north-south trade routes meant that it was a flourishing center of trade.[40] Parts of the visible city walls rest on Roman foundations. The Vardar Gate, dismantled in the nineteenth century, marked where the Via Egnatia entered the city from the west. The main Roman market has been excavated, along with an older Hellenistic agora.[41] The forum included a large open square surrounded on four sides with two story porticoes; statues of gods and goddesses watched over the market from one of the upper porticoes. The porticoes provided covered arcades for the convenience of the shoppers. Inscriptions from the city record professional associations of purple dyers, muleteers, garland makers, and a gladiatorial school.

[40]Laura Nasrallah, Charalambos Bakirtzis, and Steven J. Friesen, eds., *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē: Studies in Religion and Archaeology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[41]Michael Vickers, "Hellenistic Thessaloniki" *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 92 (1972): 156–70.

In Corinth, the churches in Macedonia (probably the Philippians) supplement Paul's income just as they had done when he was in Thessalonica (2 Cor 11:9). Paul would have needed "seed money" in this new city, at least until he met Priscilla and Aquila. Paul refused compensation from the Corinthian church when he was there, because he did not want to be included amongst the traveling philosophers and debaters who earned a living through public speaking.

Paul was especially active in his profession in Corinth where he teamed up in both his mission and his working life with Priscilla and Aquila, professional tentmakers from Rome (Acts 18:1–3). The partnership must have been quite successful in both business and mission, because Priscilla and Aquila go with Paul when he leaves Corinth. When Paul visited in the mid-first century, Corinth was on the verge of becoming the economic engine for the region and a burgeoning central market for goods and services.[42] Paul stays at least 18 months in the city and if he worked the entire time, he must have contacted the local tentmakers guild. This would have been vital for the survival of the business. Priscilla and Aquila would almost certainly have been guild members in Rome, where commerce was highly regulated.[43] The tentmaking business may have operated out of one of the shops lining the forum. The excavated shops near the forum measured 4 meters high by 4 meters deep, with a width from 2.8 to 4 meters; there may have been a communicating door or a window connecting to the shop next door. The doorway opening to the forum was the main source of light; shopping was a daytime activity only. Archaeologists have found evidence of tents and other temporary structures set up in the open spaces of the forum, undoubtedly for commercial activity.[44]

One of Paul's new colleagues in the Corinthian region, Phoebe, was another patron of Paul who shared the new Christian ideal of patronage. She was "the servant" (a deaconess, Rom 16:1–2) of the church in Cenchreae. Paul names Phoebe as a patron of many, including himself. She must have supported Paul financially as well as provided a space for the church to meet in Cenchreae. It is probable that Paul asks the Roman church to host her because her networks do not include Rome. Her homeport traded with the eastern Mediterranean world. Archaeological investigations by the American School and the Greek Ministry of Culture indicate that this port city, although small, was very wealthy.[45] Harbor installations included

[42]David K. Pettegrew, "The Changing Rural Horizons of Corinth's First Urban Christians," in *The First Urban Churches 2: Roman Corinth*, edited by J.R. Harrison and L.L. Welborn, Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2016), 153–83.

[43]Temin, *The Roman Market Economy*.

[44]Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2002), 192–98..

[45]Robert Scranton, *Kenchreai, Eastern Port of Corinth: Results of Investigations by the University of Chicago and Indiana University for the American School of Classical Studies at Athens,* Volume 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1976).

warehouses, moles, fish tanks, and taverns. The second century A.D. travel-writer Pausanius records a temple to Aphrodite and a shrine to Isis.[46] A spectacular archaeological discovery from the harbor excavations consisted of decorative panels of glass opus sectile mosaic still in their original shipping crates; these may have been intended for the Isis shrine. Although they date later than the time of Paul, they bring us a vision of his world, because they depict the harbor as seen from an approaching ship.[47]

Pauline Business Principle Number 3: Know Your Markets

One of the reasons for Paul's business success is that he understood that the eastern, Hellenistic, markets he was most familiar with were very different from those in the Aegean or the Roman west. In his home world of Syria and Cilicia, Paul does not appear to have needed business partners. Colonnaded streets are a dominant feature in eastern Roman urbanism. They function as market centers, replacing the typical western style forum.[48] He flourished in the less-regulated world of the street markets of first century Syria and Asia Minor whose cities mostly lacked large, formal market agorae or fora. The only formal market spaces normally attested in the east are Marcella—small, specialized market squares usually controlled by guilds.[49] The presence of a more formal market in the first century east is usually a mark of a strong Roman presence, such as at Paphos on Cyprus.[50]

When Paul comes into more strongly Romanized cities, he takes advantage of the presence of colleagues who understand the local markets. Lydia is a perfect example of an eastern merchant who has been quite successful in integrating herself into a more western oriented market system. As a Roman colony, Philippi had a Roman legal and judicial system, which regulated the markets. The physical structure of the city reflected a western orientation. Although relatively small, the first-century forum was linked to two small temples, a library, and administrative buildings. A commercial market adjacent to the forum was later demolished and replaced by a Christian basilica.[51]

In Corinth, Paul gains by partnering with western oriented colleagues such as Priscilla and Aquila. The partnership would have given Paul the expertise needed to take advantage of the biennial Isthmian Games held

[46]Pausanius, *Description of Greece,* 2.2.2, in Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1918).

[47]Paul will sail from this harbor to Syria in Acts 18:18.

[48]Warwick Ball, *Rome in the East: The Transformation of an Empire* (London: Routledge, 2001), 262.

[49]The marcellum of the Butchers in Jerash is an example. See Rubina Raja, *Urban Development and Regional Identity in the Eastern Roman Provinces, 50 BC–AD 250: Aphrodisias, Ephesos, Athens, Gerasa* (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen Press, 2012), 158.

[50]Davis, *Saint Paul on Cyprus*.

[51]Bakirtzis and Koester, *Philippi at the Time of Paul and after his Death*.

outside of Corinth, which occurred during his residency in the city.[52] The large influx of pilgrims, athletes, and attendees would have needed temporary accommodations during the festival. Some of the temporary visitors flooding Corinth for the games would have been elite Romans wanting to host banquets and needing opportunities to meet socially with their clients; temporary awnings would have been in high demand. Paul could have brought to the partnership his knowledge of the high quality goat hair textile called cilicium, originally produced in his home province. This would have made an excellent raw material for tents and awnings designed for elite clients and Paul's knowledge of the characteristics of this material may explain some of the partnership's professional success.

After success in Corinth, the partnership moves on to the greatest entrepot in the Aegean, Ephesus. Paul first came to Ephesus in Acts 18:19 for a short visit. After speaking in the synagogue, he continued on his journey back to Caesarea, sailing before winter closed the shipping lanes. He left Aquila and Priscilla to establish both the gospel mission and the tentmaking business in the city. Apollos, a Jewish Christian believer from Alexandria, joined them in ministry, and by the time Paul returned (Acts 19) the gospel was well established. It is certainly a reasonable assumption that Paul may not have known all of the believers personally.

Ephesus was a natural base for Paul, offering excellent land and sea connections. Just a few decades before Paul, Strabo called Ephesus the greatest emporium in the province of Asia Minor.[53] From Ephesus, Paul could easily stay in touch with the churches he had previously founded in Philippi, Corinth etc. Ephesus also was the terminus of the main east/west routes across Anatolia to the eastern provinces of the Empire, including the ancient Persian Royal Road. Paul returned to Ephesus from Antioch in Syria overland, rather than by sea, probably because a road journey gave Paul the opportunity to visit the churches he had founded in Galatia (Acts 18:23, 19:1). This route also could have provided the Apostle with an opportunity to bring to Ephesus additional business supplies, since he clearly intended to stay in Ephesus for an extended stay. The land route was relatively safe for travelers like Paul: the roads in the province were actively patrolled by the soldiers of the Legio XII Fulminata who built the road between Eumenia and Apamea.[54]

Commercially, Ephesus was a combination of east and west, which made it a perfect spot for the partnership to flourish. Ephesus had both constructed markets and street markets.[55] Embolos Street was lined with shops with colonnades shielding the sidewalks for customers to browse in comfort. Behind the street lay a wealthy residential neighborhood that has

[52]Murphy-O'Conner, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 12–15.

[53]Strabo, *Geography* 12:8.15; cf. 14.1.20-26.

[54]Stephen Mitchell, *Anatolia: Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993) 121.

[55]Raja, *Urban Development and Regional Identity in the Eastern Roman Provinces*.

given archaeologists the best glimpse of upscale urban housing in the eastern empire.[56] The eastern complex was one large urban villa, with a ground floor measuring more than 3000 square feet with numerous and spacious public rooms. It would have had a second floor that was private space for the family and servants. The seven houses in the western complex were also of two stories, but were much smaller, with ground floors measuring between 1000 and 1300 square feet. The public spaces included entry halls, a central atrium enclosing an impluvium (a pool) and usually two dining rooms opening off of the atrium. If one of these elite residences was the setting for a house church, the congregation would probably have numbered 30–40. Of course, the large urban villa could have hosted many more.

At the foot of Embolus Street, a beautifully constructed gate marked a roadway junction and gave entrance to the main market of the city, identified by inscriptions as the "Square Marketplace." Scherrer states that "after the earthquake of 23 CE, the new Tetragonos Agora [Square Marketplace] was the most important building project undertaken. It was a square with an open courtyard measuring 112 m in length, far exceeding the Hellenistic predecessor in size and magnitude. Most Recent excavations and architectural investigations show that its two-aisled stoa had an upper story on all four sides."[57] Sixty or so shops lined three sides of the square with a water clock in the center. The west gate led to the harbor of the city, which would have allowed direct access for cargoes. Representatives of the various guilds would have had their stalls here, probably including the silversmiths. Later inscriptions mention a guild of silversmiths and even provide the names of specific silversmiths.[58] Father Murphy-O'Conner identifies the agora as a likely location for the partnership to set up shop: "the sixty or so shops that surrounded three sides of its periphery provided the sort of space in which Paul, Prisca, and Aquila plied their trade, and perhaps lived. Their main light source was a door that looked out onto a magnificent two-story, two aisled portico running along all four sides and pierced by gates on the north and west."[59]

Pauline Business Principal Number 4: Always Outwork the Competition

The ideal of first century society was to not have to work physically, but to be wealthy enough to live off of the labor of others. This is not surprising

[56]Ibid.; Nadine Zimmerman and Sabine Ladstätter, *Wall Painting in Ephesos* (Instanbul: Ege Yayinlari, 2011).

[57]Peter Scherrer, "The City of Ephesos: From the Roman Period to Late Antiquity," in *Ephesos: Metropolis of Asia: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Its Archaeology, Religion, and Culture,* edited by Helmet Koester, Harvard Theological Studies (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 7–8.

[58]Scherrer, "The City of Ephesos," 4.

[59]Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Ephesus: Texts and Archaeology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical 2008), 197.

in a society where slave labor was the base of the economy.[60] As such, physical work could become devalued. In contrast, Paul had an excellent work ethic.[61] Paul, a Hellenistic Jew, openly embraced his status as a working merchant and was proud of his productivity. He openly bragged of his capacity for physical labor reminding the Corinthians that "we work hard with our hands" (1 Cor 4:12). "Work with your hands as we instructed you" he exhorts the Thessalonian church (1 Thess 4:12). In an urban setting, the client/patron system could be abused with wealthier members of the church almost forced to provide for the poorer members. The extensive system of professional associations and guilds in Thessalonica, (attested by inscriptions),[62] also could be abused by lazy workers and Paul is alert to this possibility. He commands the local believers to distance themselves from any "brother who is walking in idleness" (2 Thess 3:6). This is probably a reference to clients who are accompanying their patron on his round of duties, but not working themselves. This would have impacted the outreach of the Christian community as well, because an idler would be obvious in the business district during the main working hours of the day.[63]

Paul worked very hard in Thessalonica at his profession so he would not be a financial burden to the church while he was in residence nor did he want this witness tainted. He reminds the Thessalonians that "we worked night and day" (1 Thess 2:9). The average Roman merchant worked intensely in the six hours before noon, but then closed the shop, although the shops sometimes were open in the late afternoon for more leisurely browsing. Daylight was the main requirement for conducting business; hours would be longer in the summer and shorter in the winter. Paul wants to remind the church that he worked when most places were closed for the evening. He also may have "outworked" the competition, and financial envy may have contributed to the local opposition to the apostle.

The Result

When seen through a business lens, Paul's church planting strategy becomes clear. For Paul, business was ministry, and ministry was business. He made his shop an outreach center to all who came in to buy or negotiate.[64] It is probably no coincidence that the places where he stays the longest are the port cities of Corinth and Ephesus. The majority of churches he founds, are planted in ports and major commercial markets. He establishes the gospel in

[60]Temin, *The Roman Market Economy*.

[61]Verlyn D. Verbrugge and Keith R. Krell, *Paul & Money: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Apostle's Teachings and Practices* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2015), 206–11.

[62]Nasrallah, Bakirtzis, and Friesen, *From Roman to Early Christian Thessalonikē*.

[63]We often forget that a strong work ethic (as long as it is balanced) can be a powerful witness in the secular world. I have personally observed that the strong work ethic of Christian employees makes them valuable hires and opens doors to sharing the faith.

[64]Ronald F. Hock, *The Social Context of Paul's Ministry: Tentmaking and Apostleship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 41.

the major ports and inland shipping centers of the Aegean world: Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Thessalonica, and on the island of Crete.[65] Paul's normal products would have been middle-market tents made out of goat hair or camel hair; leather tents for the military; and, awnings and sails for ships. This meant that a mission strategy of planting churches in port cities would have had as a bi-product, a positive impact on his bottom line because he would have found a ready market amongst the shipping community for his products. Because Paul can support himself, his ministry is not tainted with corruption. This is not a health and wealth gospel ministry, but one that reflects the example of Christ.

The Church appears to have continued to have a focus on ports and the people who frequent them even after the gospel has spread widely throughout the Roman Empire. The ports and their associated maritime communities of sailors and merchants provided an already existing network that eased the spread of the gospel.[66] Early Byzantine Archaeology throughout the eastern Mediterranean world documents the physical spread of the Church in coastal settings. The island of Cyprus, visited by Paul on his first missionary journey, provides an instructive example of the continued interest of the Church in port communities even after Christianity was widespread. By the fifth century, Christianity had become established throughout the island with dozens of major and minor churches built across the landscape.[67] Four of the major urban coastal centers on the island, Amathus, Kourion, Salamis, and Paphos, have large basilicas within the main urban fabric of the city. Each city also has a port basilica, adjacent to the presumed harbor facilities of these cities.[68] These structures are the result of massive investments of time, energy and financial resources. Sometimes the urban and port basilicas are quite close to each other in physical space, and the archaeology demonstrates that they were active at the same time. We must conclude that the Church felt a continuing need to provide an active center for worship, fellowship and care, catering to the needs of the maritime community. This is perhaps the best witness of the success of the business methods of Paul of Tarsus.

[65]Recent archaeology on Crete documents the international networks connecting the island to the greater Mediterranean world. See Jane E. Francis and Anna Kouremenos, *Roman Crete: New Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Oxbow, 2016).

[66]Network theory helps us to understand how the gospel took advantage of such connections. See Carl Knappet, ed., *Network Analysis in Archaeology: New Approaches to Regional Interaction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[67]Thomas W. Davis, "Earthquakes and the Crises of Faith: Social Transformation in Late Antique Cyprus" *Buried History* 46 (2011): 3–14.

[68]Erin Daughters, *Basilica Function in the Urban Landscape of Late Antique Cyprus* (M.A. thesis, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2015).