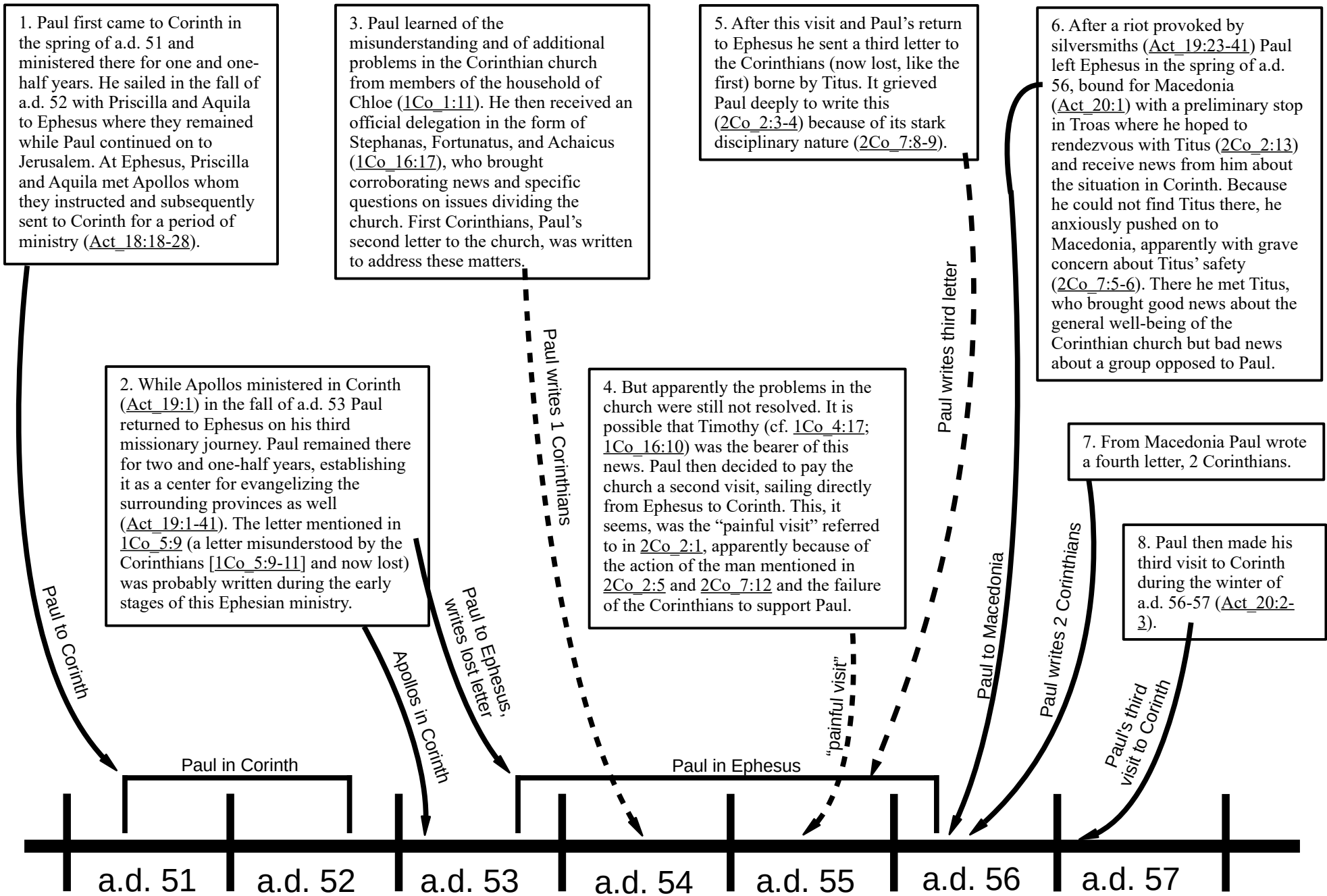


The Apostle Paul and the Corinthians Timeline

David K. Lowery, from the Bible Knowledge Commentary edited by Walvoord and Zuck, © 1983, 2000 Cook Communications Ministries



Purpose

David K. Lowery says the purpose of Paul writing 2 Corinthians were the false teachers in the Corinthian church who claimed to be apostles. There is wide debate about who these false teachers were: Hellenistic Jews, Stephen from Palestine or Timothy from the diaspora; Gnostic or Docetic heretics; Palestinian Jews claiming to be apostles, and trying to bolster Jerusalem apostles.

“Probably an unequivocal portrait of these opponents will never exist, but there is no disputing the havoc they wreaked in the Corinthian church and the heartaches they brought Paul. Though it is only in the final chapters of 2 Corinthians that Paul challenged them frontally, their influence pervades the entire letter in its threefold development.”

1. Paul discusses his ministry in relation to the Corinthians and pointedly rebuts accusations against his ministry and travel plans.
2. The collection for the poor in Jerusalem that the Corinthians had failed carry through (8:1-24, 9:1-15).
3. Final four chapters defend Paul's apostleship and denounce those who oppose him and Christ. “Above all else, Paul's identification with Christ marks this letter. His affirmation to the Galatians, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal_2:20), is graphically portrayed in 2 Corinthians 10-13.”

Unity

Lowery: “All of Paul's letters have sections which digress or are discontinuous, but in no letter is this tendency so evident as in 2 Corinthians. The circumstances under which it was composed likely contributed to this but that has not satisfied the numerous advocates who find interpolations rife in 2 Corinthians.” He notes five interpolations, and then concludes: “While the sections noted are problematic, the proposed resolutions and the resulting truncated letter are even more so. No explanation of how the fragmented lot emerged to form canonical 2 Corinthians has found even minimal acceptance. That, coupled with the fact that not a shred of manuscript evidence exists to support any interpolation, produces a burden no theory can reasonably bear. Thus 2 Corinthians has a cohesive (though digressive) unity.”

