

## INTRODUCTION: THE FIRST FRUITS OF PAULINE EVANGELISM

- Paul’s ministry marked the beginning of a distinct gospel, revealed to him by the risen Christ (Galatians 1:11–12).
- The following individuals and households received that message early and became foundational figures in the spread of Pauline Christianity.
- Whether Jews or Gentiles, prominent or unknown, these converts were instrumental in the early days of the faith.

## I. ANDRONICUS AND JUNIA – IN CHRIST BEFORE PAUL

- **Who:** Two Jewish believers noted by Paul as “kinsmen” and “fellowprisoners,” known and respected among the apostles.
- **What Scripture Says:**
  - “Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” (Romans 16:7).
  - Note: there is a long-standing debate over Junia (masculine) or Junias (feminine). In the accusative, as it is here, the masculine/feminine endings for this particular word disappear. The KJV has made it a masculine, while most modern translations go with the feminine “Junias.”
- **Where:** Likely located in Rome at the time Paul wrote his epistle, though their earlier activities may have involved Jerusalem or other mission fields.
- **Additional Insight:**
  - Paul refers to them as “kinsmen,” which likely means fellow Jews, though some traditions take this as literal family.
  - Being “in Christ before me” means they were believers before Paul’s Damascus Road conversion, possibly part of the original church in Jerusalem.
    - Note that they were kingdom believers, adhering to the message of Peter.
    - We would assume that they later trusted that Paul received the revelation of the mystery and also adopted this message, as did so many others.
  - The phrase “of note among the apostles” could mean either that they were well known to the apostles or counted among them. Patristic tradition often favors the latter.
  - “Fellowprisoners” implies that they were, at some point, imprisoned for the sake of the gospel, either with Paul or under similar conditions.
- **Why They Matter:**
  - They demonstrate that Paul recognized faithful workers who had been following Christ even before his own conversion.
  - Their inclusion in the greeting list of Romans shows they were known not only for past service but also for continued influence.
  - Junia, in particular, has long drawn attention for her potential role as a female apostle or leading figure in the early church.

## TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Church Recognition:** Celebrated in Eastern Orthodox (May 17) and some Roman Catholic (May 29) traditions as Saints Andronicus and Junia, Equal-to-the-Apostles. Eastern tradition considers them among the Seventy Apostles, with Andronicus later serving as bishop of Pannonia. Some accounts suggest they were martyred, though details are uncertain.

## II. THE HOUSEHOLD OF STEPHANAS – FIRSTFRUITS OF ACHAIA

- **Who:** Stephanas and his family, among the earliest converts in the region of Achaia (likely Corinth).
- **What Scripture Says:**

- **“And I baptized also the household of Stephanas.”** (1 Corinthians 1:16).
- **“Ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints.”** (1 Corinthians 16:15).
- Paul commends them as exemplary laborers and mentions Stephanas alongside Fortunatus and Achaicus as refreshing his spirit (1 Corinthians 16:17–18).
- **Where:** Achaia (southern Greece), likely based in Corinth where Paul labored for 18 months (Acts 18:11).
- **Additional Insight:**
  - “Firstfruits of Achaia” suggests they were among the very first to respond to Paul’s gospel in that province.
  - Being baptized by Paul suggests that they accepted the “Gospel of Christ” (i.e.: the identity of the Messiah) based on Paul’s teaching. Compare Acts 18:5.
  - Their self-initiated commitment to ministry set a tone for service and spiritual leadership in the local assembly.
  - Paul urges the Corinthian church to submit to them and others who “helpeth with us and laboreth” (1 Corinthians 16:16).
  - The household likely included adult children or extended family, based on the language of devotion to ministry.
- **Why They Matter:**
  - Their example legitimizes lay leadership and voluntary service as vital to the early church experience.

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#### TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- Some early sources connect Stephanas with church leadership in Corinth, but documentation is sparse. There are no feast days or veneration of Stephanas. There is no tradition about his ministry beyond that which is mentioned in Scripture.

### III. CRISPUS – CHIEF RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE

- **Who:** A prominent Jewish leader in Corinth, serving as the chief ruler of the synagogue.
- **What Scripture Says:**
  - **“And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”** (Acts 18:8).
  - **“I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.”** (1 Corinthians 1:14).
- **Where:** Corinth, a major Roman city in the province of Achaia (southern Greece), where Paul ministered for 18 months (Acts 18:11).
- **Additional Insight:**
  - As ARCHISYNAGŌGOS (chief ruler of the synagogue), Crispus would have been responsible for overseeing the administration of synagogue life, including selecting readers, organizing services, and maintaining order during worship. This role was not equivalent to the later office of RABBI, which had not yet developed. First-century synagogues were typically community-led, governed by elders and lay leaders rather than professional clergy.
  - His conversion would have been a significant blow to the Jewish community’s resistance to Paul, as it signaled a public shift in authority and influence toward Paul’s message.
  - His entire household followed in belief, and he is one of the few individuals specifically said to be baptized by Paul himself.
  - This event occurred just as Paul was rejected in the synagogue and relocated to the house of Justus next door (Acts 18:6–7), marking a pivotal shift in Paul’s ministry in Corinth from a synagogue-based effort to a predominantly Gentile outreach.
  - Given his continued association with Paul and early leadership in the Corinthian assembly, it is highly likely that Crispus also came to embrace the **Pauline mystery**—that salvation was now offered freely to Jew and Gentile alike without distinction, apart from the Law. Note that the Corinthian church, like the Corinthian letters, are largely Jewish.
- **Why He Matters:**
  - Crispus is one of the very few individuals we are specifically told were baptized by Paul himself.

- His conversion symbolized the gospel's ability to reach into the leadership of Jewish communities.

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#### TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Feast Day:** October 4 in Eastern Orthodox tradition, among the Seventy Apostles.
- **Veneration:** Known as Saint Crispus of Corinth.
- **Traditional Account:** Orthodox tradition names him among the Seventy Apostles and as a bishop of either Aegina or Chalcedon. Some accounts suggest martyrdom, though details are unconfirmed.
- **Depiction:** Orthodox iconography shows him among the Seventy, typically in bishop's vestments.

### IV. JUSTUS – GOD-FEARER WITH A STRATEGIC LOCATION

- **Who:** Also called TITUS JUSTUS, a Gentile worshiper of the God of Israel who opened his home to Paul in Corinth.
- **What Scripture Says:**
  - **“And he departed thence, and entered into a certain man’s house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue.”** (Acts 18:7).
- **Where:** Corinth, during Paul’s 18-month ministry there (Acts 18:11).
- **Additional Insight:**
  - Justus is described as a “God-fearer,” indicating he was a Gentile who revered Israel’s God but had not undergone full conversion to Judaism.
  - His house stood adjacent to the synagogue, making it a strategic and symbolic location for Paul’s continued ministry after formal synagogue rejection.
  - This shift from synagogue preaching to meeting in Justus’s home signals more than just a spatial change—it marks a **dispensational turning point**. While Paul had preached that **Jesus is the Christ** (Acts 18:5), the move into a Gentile believer’s house represents the beginning of the **mystery gospel’s visible independence** from the prophetic and kingdom-based message tied to Israel.
  - Although Justus disappears from the narrative, his role in this moment shows his alignment with Paul’s unfolding revelation of grace.
- **Why He Matters:**
  - Justus’s hospitality created the first formal space in Corinth for what would become the **body of Christ**, distinct from the synagogue and free from Mosaic oversight.
  - His conversion and support illustrate the quiet but essential role of transitional believers who embraced **Paul’s new message**, even while its full implications were still unfolding.

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#### TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Feast Day:** October 30 in Eastern Orthodox tradition as one of the Seventy Apostles.
- **Veneration:** Known as Saint Justus of Corinth.
- **Church Tradition:**
  - Sometimes identified as one of the Seventy Apostles, though this may be confused with other figures named Justus.
  - Some sources name him as bishop of Eleutheropolis or the Peloponnese.
  - Known mainly for his hospitality to Paul.
- **Other Biblical Figures Named Justus:**
  - Joseph Barsabas (Acts 1:23)
  - Jesus called Justus (Colossians 4:11)
  - "Justus" was a common Roman name meaning "righteous."

### V. GAIUS – HOST AND HELPER

- **Who:** A believer closely associated with Paul; one of the few individuals explicitly named as baptized by Paul.
- **What Scripture Says:**

- **“I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius.”** (1 Corinthians 1:14).
- **“Gaius mine host, and of the whole church, saluteth you.”** (Romans 16:23).
- Possibly: **“And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Paul’s companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.”** (Acts 19:29).
- Possibly: **“The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth.”** (3 John 1:1).
- **Where:** Primarily associated with Corinth (from 1 Corinthians 1:14), though multiple men named Gaius appear in the New Testament and may not all be the same person.
- **Additional Insight:**
  - The Gaius of 1 Corinthians and Romans is likely the same man—Paul’s host during the writing of Romans and a baptized believer in Corinth.
  - His house served not only Paul but “the whole church,” suggesting it was a meeting place for believers.
  - The Gaius of Acts 19:29 is described as a Macedonian and companion in travel, which may indicate a different individual unless he had relocated.
  - The Gaius of 3 John is praised for hospitality and truthfulness. Though likely another Gaius, the repetition of these traits is notable.
- **Why He Matters:**
  - Gaius models the kind of quiet, behind-the-scenes faithfulness that made Paul’s ministry possible.
  - His generosity extended beyond Paul to the local assembly, indicating that his household was a key hub for the early church in Corinth.
  - His example of hospitality and support provides a template for lay ministry within the body of Christ.

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#### TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Feast Days:** January 4 (Eastern Orthodox), October 20 (Roman Catholic)
- **Veneration:** Known as Saint Gaius of Corinth
- **Church Legacy:**
  - Named among the Seventy Apostles in Orthodox tradition
  - Served as Bishop of Thessalonica or Ephesus according to early sources
- **Biblical References:**
  - Three distinct Gaiuses mentioned in NT: Corinth, Macedonia, and Derbe, plus one in 3 John
- **Later Impact:** Remembered in church writings and dedications for his hospitality

### VI. LYDIA – THE FIRST CONVERT IN EUROPE

- **Who:** A seller of purple (a costly fabric dye), originally from Thyatira in Asia, living in Philippi.
- **What Scripture Says:**
  - **“A seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened...”** (Acts 16:14).
  - She was baptized, along with her household, and insisted that Paul and his companions lodge at her house (**Acts 16:15**).
  - After Paul’s release from prison, he returned to her home and found the brethren there (**Acts 16:40**).
- **Where:** Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia (modern northern Greece); originally from Thyatira, a city in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), known for its dyeing industry.
- **Additional Insight:**
  - Lydia was likely a Gentile proselyte to Judaism, as indicated by the phrase “worshipped God.”
  - Her trade in purple cloth suggests wealth and independence, uncommon for women in that period.
  - She becomes the first recorded convert to on European soil.
  - Her home appears to have become the meeting place for the first church in Philippi.
- **Why She Matters:**
  - As the first European convert, Lydia represents the westward expansion of the faith.
  - Her immediate faith, hospitality, and leadership display the role of women in the spread of Paul’s gospel.

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#### TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Feast Days:** August 3 (Western) and May 20 (Eastern Orthodox).
- **Veneration:** Known as Saint Lydia of Thyatira, called "Equal to the Apostles" in Orthodox tradition.
- **Sites:** A baptistery and church honor her near Philippi, Greece.
- **Legacy:**
  - Notable as a female church leader in the New Testament.
  - Cited in discussions of early church female leadership.

## VII. PHILIPPIAN JAILER – SALVATION IN CRISIS

- **Who:** A Roman prison official responsible for guarding Paul and Silas in Philippi.
- **What Scripture Says:**
  - **“And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep... drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled.”** (Acts 16:27).
  - **“But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here.”** (Acts 16:28).
  - **“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”** (Acts 16:30).
  - **“And they spake unto him the word of the Lord... and was baptized, he and all his, straightway.”** (Acts 16:32–33).
- **Where:** Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia.
- **Additional Insight:**
  - The jailer was possibly a retired Roman soldier—such individuals were often placed in administrative or custodial roles in Roman colonies.
  - His immediate reaction to the earthquake and open prison doors—intending suicide—was based on Roman military codes, which punished guards severely if prisoners escaped.
  - Paul’s interjection not only saved his life but opened the door to his salvation.
  - The jailer’s question, “What must I do to be saved?” allowed Paul to give a direct and simple expression of the gospel of grace: **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”** (Acts 16:31).
- **Why He Matters:**
  - He is the first named male Gentile in Macedonia whose entire household is recorded as becoming believers.
  - His conversion demonstrates how dramatic circumstances and personal crisis can become turning points for gospel reception.
  - His story provides a model of personal belief, immediate obedience, and household transformation.
  - Assuming (as I do) that he was saved under the Pauline mystery and not the Jewish Kingdom program, this becomes a clear expression of the grace Gospel and also shows that Baptism was, at least initially, allowed in a grace-expression of faith.

## TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Feast Days:** Honored collectively with other Pauline converts in Orthodox tradition.
- **Veneration:** Remembered as an early European convert, though not officially canonized.
- **Legacy in Church Tradition:**
  - Later tradition names him KALLISTRATOS, though this is speculative.
  - Said to have become a Philippian church leader under Lydia's leadership.
  - His transformation from jailer to believer is often cited in Christian teaching.
- **Commemorative Mentions:**
  - Frequently referenced in sermons and teaching materials.
  - Though no churches bear his name, his role in the Philippian church is widely respected.

## VIII. JASON – HOST IN THESSALONICA

- **Who:** A Jewish believer in Thessalonica who received and supported Paul and Silas during their ministry there.
- **What Scripture Says:**

- **“And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city...”** (Acts 17:6).
- **“Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.”** (Acts 17:7).
- **“And when they had taken security of Jason, and of the other, they let them go.”** (Acts 17:9).
- **“Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you.”** (Romans 16:21).
- **Where:** Thessalonica (Macedonia), a significant Roman city and commercial center.
- **Additional Insight:**
  - Jason appears to be the first known convert and house host in Thessalonica.
  - When Paul and Silas were sought by an angry mob, Jason’s home was targeted—suggesting it was the known meeting place for the missionaries.
  - He was dragged before the city rulers and forced to pay a security deposit, possibly as a guarantee that Paul and his companions would leave.
- **Why He Matters:**
  - Jason’s courageous hospitality during a time of violent opposition reflects early Christian commitment to the faith, even at personal risk.
  - His legal involvement also implies a recognized leadership role in the emerging Thessalonian church.
  - His later presence in Rome (Romans 16:21) may suggest he continued to support Paul’s ministry far beyond Thessalonica.

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#### TRADITIONAL AND HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- **Feast Days:** April 28 (Eastern Orthodox), July 12 (Roman Catholic)
- **Veneration:** Known as Saint Jason of Thessalonica
- **Church Tradition:**
  - Named among the Seventy Apostles in Eastern tradition
  - Ministered with Sosipater on Corfu, building churches and converting many
  - Served as bishop of Tarsus according to tradition
- **Legacy:** Commemorated in Orthodox texts and church dedications throughout Greece