

Who was Erastus in the Bible?

Erastus was a coworker of the apostle Paul, a civil servant in Corinth, and a believer in Jesus Christ. As the director of public works (Romans 16:23), Erastus would have been quite an influential man. His duties likely included the upkeep of civic buildings and city streets and the collection of public revenue; in some cases, he even may have acted as a lawyer of sorts in public disputes (Paul D. Gardner, *New International Encyclopedia of Bible Characters*). Erastus may have overseen the maintenance of Roman infrastructure, such as aqueducts and sewers.

The apostle Paul preached and ministered in Ephesus for over two years, and every Jew and Greek who lived in the province of Asia had a chance to hear the Word (Acts 19:10). Eventually, Paul resolved to go to Jerusalem. On his way, he passed through Macedonia, where he must have seen exciting opportunities for ministry. So he sent Erastus, along with Timothy, to Macedonia while he moved on (verse 22). It is unknown whether Erastus was already with Paul or whether Paul contacted him in Corinth by letter; either way, it is clear that Erastus was heavily involved in practical ministry and missionary work. Commentators are divided on whether the Erastus who ministered in Macedonia was the same Erastus who was the city director in Corinth.

The last mention of Erastus is in part of a letter written near the end of Paul's life: "Erastus stayed in Corinth, and I left Trophimus sick in Miletus" (2 Timothy 4:20). From the wording of this verse, it seems that Erastus did travel and minister with Paul at some point before returning to his public office in Corinth.

What can we learn from Erastus? In spite of his prominent rank, Erastus regarded ministry as his top priority, even leaving his work in Corinth to spread the gospel in

foreign lands. He did not, however, neglect his public duties, but was a servant of the people such as Paul describes in Romans 13:3-4. We can see from Erastus's example that we too should hold continual service to Christ as our ultimate goal in life. Rich or poor, we can serve God cheerfully and faithfully in whatever position He grants us.