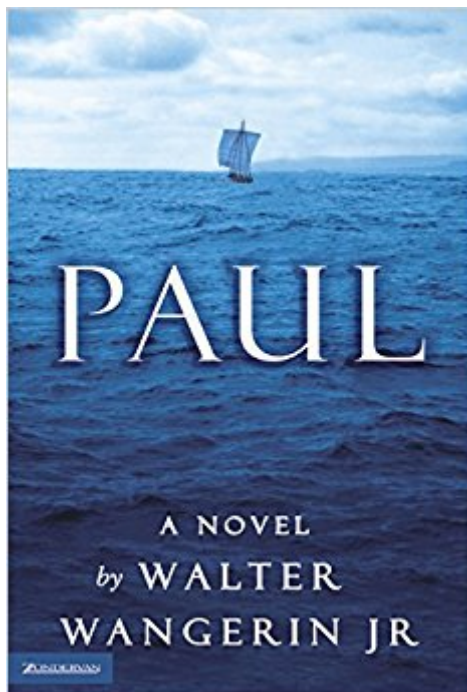


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Paul: A Novel



Synopsis

An intimate portrait of a complex individual through whom God was at work, turning the world upside down. With vivid imagination and scholarly depth, award-winning author Walter Wangerin Jr. weaves together the history of the early church with the life story of its greatest apostle--Paul. Wangerin begins to unfold Paul's incredible life by imagining the childhood and early family life of a boy then called "Saul." A fierce prosecutor of Christians before his conversion, Paul never lost his fiery dedication, boldness, and strong personality. After his shocking encounter with God on the road to Damascus, he applied his formidable strengths to spreading the gospel. Wangerin deftly reveals Paul's character through each stage of his life, and enables us to see Paul the person, living and complex, viewed through the eyes of his contemporaries: Barnabas, James, Prisca, Seneca, and Luke. Paul's rich interaction and brilliant dialogue with friends and foes, leaders and slaves, Jews and Greeks, creates a swift and intense historical drama around the man who spread the seed of the Gospel to the ends of the known world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Saul of Tarsus, the impassioned rabbi and persecutor of Christians, had a Damascus road experience that changed his life and helped shape the future of the world. As Paul, writer of some of the meatiest chunks of the New Testament and zealous missionary to the Gentiles, he became one of the most controversial figures in history. Yet what do we know about the man, other than what's in the letters that have fashioned the Christian church for 2,000 years? Unless you are a theologian

or historian, the answer probably is very little--until now. Walter Wangerin, the highly acclaimed scholar and writer, has breathed new life into this fiery, enigmatic, and passionate creature in what should be celebrated as a seriously good work of literature. The novel, which combines expert knowledge and prophetic imagination, charts the first exhilarating and dangerous years of the church after the death of Christ. It is seen through the eyes of the witnesses--Priscilla, who meets Paul in Corinth; Barnabus, Timothy, and Titus, his companions; James and Simon Peter, the "pillar" of the first Christians; and Seneca, the great Roman writer, statesman, and adviser to Nero. Wangerin serves up a feast of color and detail that brings the first century--and, even more impressively, the Bible--alive. Whatever your religious persuasion, this book serves as a fine companion to the one of the greatest yet most puzzling stories ever told. --Brian Draper, .co.uk --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In his second Bible-based novel, Wangerin delivers an uneven but informative narrative portraying the Apostle Paul as a flawed, confrontational man who inspires either murderous hate or passionate love. Reminiscent of both Eugene Peterson's paraphrased New Testament and Robert Graves's dishy novels about the Roman emperors, this book borrows from the Bible and various other historical sources to chronicle the itinerant ministry of Paul from his preconversion persecution of Christians to his execution in Rome. Each chapter is narrated by a different character--generally one of Paul's close associates--and while this technique successfully brings biblical figures to life, it disrupts the narrative flow. The story is punctuated by epistolary fragments from the Bible--and perhaps most interesting but least connected to the rest of the text--Seneca's gossipy letters about Nero and political intrigues in Rome. To his credit, Wangerin breathes life into the women who are mentioned but never fleshed out in Paul's letters, particularly Prisca, and he takes pains to emphasize the multicultural, multiethnic composition of the first-century church. Nor does he downplay the hardships these groups encountered as they attempted to find common ground. In fact, the novel focuses almost too exclusively on Paul's attempts to reconcile Gentile and Jewish followers of Jesus. While overwrought dialogue about circumcision and Jewish food restrictions is often tedious, readers wishing insight into Paul, the New Testament church and the schisms that nearly destroyed it will be rewarded for their patience. (May) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Rarely have I encountered a book with such brilliant wordsmithing as this one. Wangerin, a Lutheran pastor and professor at Valparaiso University, is possibly the best storyteller I've ever

read. Many times I re-read passages just to marvel at how beautifully written they were!"Paul" is a novelized version of the life of the apostle Paul, narrated by those who knew him, including Prisca, Luke, Timothy, James, Titus, and Barnabas. While obviously a work of fiction, Wangerin has done a lot of research into the geography, lifestyle, and political landscape of Paul's time. While he has taken some artistic liberties in describing things left unsaid in Scripture (such as what specifically was the thorn in Paul's flesh mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:7), most of the "story" is taken directly from the Bible and historically reliable extra-Biblical accounts. Under most circumstances, I would frown on an attempt to write this sort of novel, but I believe Wangerin has done a masterful job. It's important to realize that this book is NOT written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but it has greatly helped my understanding of the New Testament and the early Church seem much more "real".

I finished this book several days ago and have been pondering how to describe it. It is surprising that another reviewer was so critical of Wangerin's portrayal of Paul. Paul wrote much about suffering and weakness, and about glorying in Christ alone. This book gives some plausible reasons why he did so. It completely changed my view of Paul. As a girl who grew up knowing Christ, Paul sometimes baffled me. In fact, he sometimes offended me. I thought he had a view of women that painted us inferior...I remember as a teenager wrestling with his words and thinking of God's negative view of me! So Paul has not always been beloved in my life. That is why I am genuinely thankful for this novel. It opened my eyes to the passion of Paul. It made me see the apostles and their writings in a living, breathing context. I know that this book is fiction, and I am sure that there are parts of it that are complete fiction. But now I can read the New Testament as a part of an amazing story. Instead of reading a passage and immediately looking for things that apply to me, I am more able to read it as the powerful history that it is. I don't see Paul as preaching at me, but as living for the same Spirit who is in me. I see him as a brother heeding an amazing calling - the same calling that I have. And the way that he lived for that calling is so inspiring. The way he impacted the church, even though he suffered greatly, is an example for us. Wangerin used Bible verses and references throughout this novel. Through the events that unfold, he shows all of the drama and passion that were behind the words. We see the great conflicts of the day that inspired Paul's words. Buy this book! You will want to read it more than once. The writing style is fascinating, but not too complex for the average reader. I just can't recommend it enough, especially for those who have read a lot of Scripture and could use a refreshing read. It will make you want to pull out your Bible and read more! I have even purchased two more of Wangerin's books because of this one's impact.

Oh, and God used this book to help me in a time of despair. It would be great for a depressed Christian who is easily discouraged when reading Scripture. It is encouraging and inspiring, and it made me remember why I love the Lord and Scripture so much.

Not being an author, I have always yearned for someone *else* to show the modern world what an incredible drama the stories of Paul & the early church hold. Wangerin has done a very good job, although I have some caveats to offer. On the positive side, the book does a fine job of character development in bringing some of the "stars" to life. Wangerin's James especially, as he struggles with his great respect for Paul & his angry astonishment at some of their differences, makes an impact on me. Some Christians may get anxious at the idea of Wangerin's artistic license as he speculates in order to flush out these characters, but rather than drawing one away from the scriptures, it brings a new excitement about them. At least in this reader! On the down side, the read is a little bumpy. Wangerin employs a variety of voices (Prisca, James, Timothy....interestingly enough, never Paul) to tell the story, and switching gears from person to person can be disorienting. So buckle yourself into your chariot before the journey, but then sit back & enjoy!

Wow, I am not easily impressed but this book was so well written. Obviously, the author has a strong biblical background. It's fact based fiction and he does a wonderful job surmising what may have happened in Paul's life. Do not read this as gospel, it's not meant that way. However, it sure made me think more of Paul's life and everything he went through. I highly recommend for anyone who admires the Apostle Paul of the Bible.

True Wangerin style! Awesome!

pretty good.

If one wants to read a story about St Paul... this is it! Using research and imagination Dr. Wangerin has masterfully written Paul's struggling story. Persecution of the Christians was his way of life and then he is their strongest advocate. Many people have an eye opening turn of events that wake them to the faith life shared by Christians. And surely Paul had just that. Paul's humanity, love and care for the churches he founded broke his heart and his body. He did more than others to bring Christ's story to the people of the time. He was a great man and we Christians have much to be thankful for with him.

Thoroughly enjoyed this book. Very easy read and brought a humanity to the biblical characters. Obviously this is a work of fiction, so the author takes liberties, but I felt he tried to stay as close to the bible as possible, so you really don't feel like you're reading fiction. Have recommended this to many people.

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