

6. ERASTUS INSCRIPTION*

Three persons by the name of Erastus are mentioned in the New Testament. One is mentioned alongside Timothy as helpers of Paul in Ephesus (Acts 19:22), another is said by Paul to have remained at Corinth (2 Tim 4:20), though Paul continued his trip. Since Paul mentions him in his epistle, it is likely that Timothy knew him. Last of all, Paul sent greetings from a man known as Erastus to the recipients of the apostle's letter to the Romans, "Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you." (Rom 16:23b HCSB)." Paul identified this person as the *ὁ οἰκονομος τῆς πόλεως*, (*ho oikonomos tes poleos*) the treasurer, manager or administrator of the city.¹ The first and second Erastus listed above very likely are the same person because of the nexus with Timothy, and persons two and three are the same because of the connection to Corinth. Consequently all three are probably the same person.²

Gillman has argued that the latter Erastus may have been a city slave,³ the likelihood is that Erastus had an important status in Corinth to warrant Paul's mention of him as the *οἰκονομος*, in the view of Thiessen.⁴ The Roman colony of Corinth would have had a Roman municipal structure, with the *οἰκονομος* as the Greek equivalent of the Latin office of *aedilis*.

One finds at Corinth a startling connection with Romans 16:23 at the Corinth, in a grassy area not normally visited by tour groups today. At the head of a pavement is a long slab with reference to a person named Erastus. Scholars are in agreement that the inscription dates to the middle of the first century A.D. The pavement is located east of the city theater. An *aedilis* was commissioned with the task to manage public markets, If indeed this builder of the pavement is the same person mentioned by Paul, Erastus and Paul may have become acquainted while Erastus was about his duties of collecting rent or taxes, according to Murphy-O'Connor.⁵

The inscription regarding Erastus reads, "Erastus laid this pavement at his own expense, in appreciation of his appointment as aedile."⁶ Only two of the three slabs of the inscription have been found. The central slab found in situ in April 1929, reads:

ERASTUS.PRO.AED
S.P.STRAVIT

Two portions of right slab were found in March 1928 and August 1947, allowing more complete reading,

ERASTUS.PRO.AEDILITatE
S.P.STRAVIT⁷

Thus the extant text reads in Latin,
ERASTUS PRO AEDILITATE
S.P. STRAVIT

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¹ BDAG defines *οἰκονομος* as public treasurer, *treasurer* *ὁ οἰκ. τῆς πόλεως* *the city treasurer* (SIG 1252 *πόλεως Κόρων οἰκονόμος*; other exx. in P. Landvogt, *Epigr. Untersuchungen üb. den οἰκονόμος*, diss. Strassb. 1908; H. Cadbury, *JBL* 50, '31, 47ff) Ro 16:23. BDAG, 698.

² G. A. Lee in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988; 2002).

³ Florence Morgan Gillman Associate Professor, University of San Diego, San Diego, CA David Noel Freedman, *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1996).

⁴ G. Thiessen, 1982: 76. Thiessen, G. 1982. *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity. Essays on Corinth*. Philadelphia.

⁵ Murphy-O'Connor, 1984: 155) Murphy-O'Connor, J. 1984. *The Corinth That Saint Paul Saw. BA* 47: 147–59.

⁶ A. F. Walls, in D. R. W. Wood and I. Howard Marshall, *New Bible Dictionary* (3rd ed.; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 332.

⁷ "S.P is a standard abbreviation for *sua pecunia*, 'with his own money' (See J.H. Kent, *Corinth—Inscriptions*, #231 for a similar inscription celebrating a benefaction given *sua pecunia*).")

This may be rendered, with likely wording of missing first slab, “Praenomen nomen Erastus in return for his aedileship laid (the pavement) at his own expense.”⁸

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⁸ For a more complete study Erastus and the Erastus inscription, see Andrew D. Clarke, *Secular & Christian Leadership in Corinth: A Socio-Historical & Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 1-6* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 46-57.