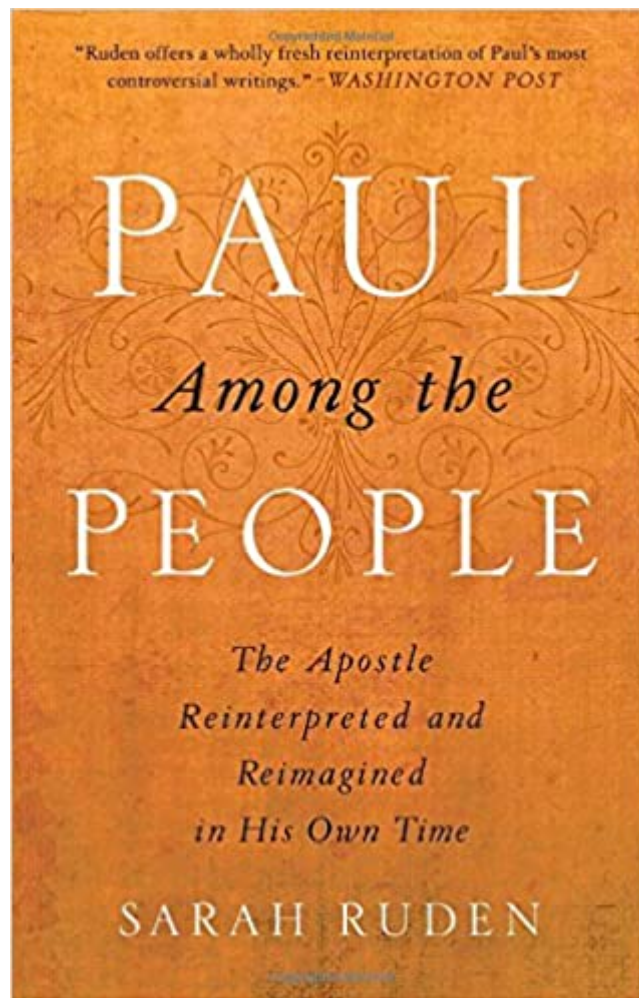




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# Paul Among The People: The Apostle Reinterpreted And Reimagined In His Own Time



## Synopsis

In *Paul Among the People*, Sarah Ruden explores the writings of the evangelist Paul in the context of his time and culture, to recover his original message of freedom and love while overturning the common and fundamental misconception that Paul represented a puritanical, hysterically homophobic, misogynist, or reactionary vision. By setting famous and controversial words of Paul against ancient Greek and Roman literature, Ruden reveals a radical message of human freedom and dignity at the heart of Paul's preaching. Her training in the Classics allows her to capture the stark contrast between Paul's Christianity and the violence, exploitation, and dehumanization permeating the Roman Empire in his era. In contrast to later distortions, the vision of Christian life Ruden finds in Paul is centered on equality before God and the need for people to love one another. A remarkable work of scholarship, synthesis, and understanding, *Paul Among the People* recaptures the moral urgency and revolutionary spirit that made Christianity such a shock to the ancient world and laid the foundation of the culture in which we live today.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: Image; 7.3.2011 edition (August 2, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0385522576

ISBN-13: 978-0385522571

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.5 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 70 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #66,119 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > New Testament > Paul's Letters #89 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Bible Study & Reference > Criticism & Interpretation > New Testament #105 in Books > History > World > Religious > General

## Customer Reviews

**\*Starred Review\*** The astonishingly high quality of the new literature concerned with the greatest missionary apostle continues in poet and classical translator Ruden's cross-referencing of Paul and his literary confreres who describe the world in which Paul spread and strengthened the

new faith in Christ. Her project enables her to call the standard repertoire of Pauline characterizations seriously into question. Paul's cross-references show us a Greek and Roman world of great brutality, given to pleasures carried to damaging and even fatal extremes. Nor was there any notion of inhumane punishment; hence, crucifixion, to which only commoners and slaves were subjected. Homosexuality was basically anal rape of adolescent boys, the more painful the better for the socially superior rapists. Women of high status were veiled, while unveiled women were treated as prostitutes and criminals. Slaves were so unequal to masters that they might have been a different, inferior species. The nonviolent love and community that Christianity preached radically differed from such exploitative, status-based norms, and Paul's preaching, perceived as being against homosexuality and higher status for non-ruling-class women and slaves, looks very different when contrasted with those Greco-Roman norms as reported by writers from Aristophanes to Apuleius. Judiciously citing her own behavior to bring certain points home to contemporary readers, Ruden is winningly intimate as well as impressively scholarly in this superb book. --Ray Olson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Praise for Sarah Ruden: Paul Among the People "Ruden offers a wholly fresh reinterpretation of Paul's most controversial writings." --Washington Post "Ruden is winningly intimate as well as impressively scholarly in this superb book." --Booklist "The most exciting book of historical analysis I've read in ages -- indeed the most exciting book period | What makes reading Ruden such a pleasure, aside from the quality of her thinking and her prose, is her willingness to question settled truths, and to do it with such a lightness of spirit." --Rod Dreher, Beliefnet "Wonderfully unexpected." --Christianity Today "The Aeneid -- The best translation yet, certainly the best of our time." --Ursula K. Le Guin "The first translation since Dryden's that can be read as a great English poem in itself." --Garry Wills, The New York Review of Books "An Aeneid more intimate in tone and soberer in measure than we are used to -- a gift for which many will be grateful." --J. M. Coetzee "An intimate rendering of great emotional force and purity . . . The immediacy, beauty, and timelessness of the original Latin masterpiece lifts off these pages with gemlike originality." --Choice "A perfect Lysistrata for the new millennium: rich apparatus and a sparkling, metrical, accurate translation of this inexhaustible treasure of a play." --Rachel Hadas, Rutgers University "Satyricon" Ruden has

caught, better than any translator known to me, both the conversational patterns of Petronian dialogue and the camera-sharp specificity and color of the *Satyricon*. . . . A quite extraordinary achievement. . . . Peter Green, Los Angeles Book Review

“Relying on her excellent knowledge of Latin, her lively feel for contemporary slang and rhythm, and her infectious love of the work, Ruden gives us the full *Satyricon* . . . Her book, breathing knowledge and affection, is a delight. . . . Donald Lyons, *The New Criterion*

Great. Finally a classicist other than C.S Lewis writing on Paul's ideas in the first century. Not what you think it is! But it turns the light on for the study of Christianity's greatest Apostle and founder of "the Church" as we think we know it. Or do we? And, she has a sense of humor!

I've been a student/follower of Scripture all my life. I've listened to countless sermons about what Paul means by this or that--bogus for the most part. I've been a part of many discussions where none of us knew the context for the issues we were so sure we were right about. This is the first book I've read that explains Paul in his own cultural context.

The reader is greeted in the preface with a fair summary of the bare facts of Paul. Those bare facts are sure to raise the blood pressure of more traditional readers as they firmly set the author as a member of the modern academy. That traditional reader would be at that point ready for yet another 'see Paul really agrees with my modern thoughts' work. That is not what follows. Dr. Ruden is both true to her scholarly field, and true to the text of scripture. In the process she skewers her admitted modern academy view of Paul ("I kept Paul in a pen out back") and the narrow traditional view of Paul as a prop for authority of all stripes. The author reads the modern controversial passages from Paul (homosexuality, role of women, marriage, authority) and places them firmly in the context they were written. Unlike the typical academic cherry picking of sources, Dr. Ruden's passion and commitment to her field shine in every section. The conclusions should be deeply troubling to both academic and traditionalist alike. Paul's call is much deeper than the straw men both camps stand up. The call is to "deal with the everyday world in an exemplary way" - faith that God is bigger than we can imagine and that His love is what makes our tragically incomplete selves fulfilled. The author does not seek to answer or settle arguments that can't be, nor does she suggest modern technocratic and programmatic ways forward. True to her subject she "sees there is only one way to win". If you are looking to have your views confirmed, don't read this book. If you want open yourself up to being cut to the heart, let Dr. Ruden lead you through some of her revelations of Paul's call.

Bought this as a gift for a pastor as I don't want to let go of my copy. Ms. Ruden writes very clearly and explains her views well. Really helps to know what the Apostle Paul probably meant by studying what the Greek meant to people in the first century. Easily readable by an intelligent reader -- no knowledge of Greek needed.

This book took me by surprise with its lack of agenda (aside from revealing the truer Paul) and fantastic scholarship. Read it!

Some things never change; but the Romans were terrible in the way they treated people. No wonder St. Paul had no use for The current practices of his day. Puts the discussions of sexuality and same-sex relationships in an entirely new light. Besides, The translations from the original into English are marvelous.

I really liked the clear references to historical texts and the way they were used to help me meet Paul where he was when he was writing. It got me out of my world and put me in his and his letters took on much more beauty.

Superbly crafted volume offering rare and profound insight into the New Testament. Ruden's training in Classics, cultivated literary sensibility, and, I think, sound character, have enabled her to produce a work far outstripping most publications coming from Biblical Studies itself.

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