

# Erastus the Treasurer

(Compiled by Paul R. Blake)

## Introduction:

A. Erastus, a preacher, was a valuable member of the apostle Paul's company

1. Rom. 16:23 - "Gaius, my host and the host of the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the treasurer of the city, greets you, and Quartus, a brother." During the winter of 57 AD, Paul was in Corinth. From there, he wrote the longest single letter in the New Testament, which he addressed to "God's beloved in Rome" (1:7).
2. Acts 19:22 - "So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time." Paul sends them in 54 AD at the height of his ministry. He entrusts the care of the Macedonian churches and Timothy in the hands of Erastus.
3. 2Tim. 4:20 - "Erastus stayed in Corinth, but Trophimus I have left in Miletus sick." Near the end of Paul's ministry, he has Erastus stay in Corinth to work with perhaps the most troubled congregation he started. These verses tell us somewhat of the kind of man Erastus was.

B. Who was Erastus?

1. Erastus is a rarely used name in the Bible and in history. In other references in history it was a name used by slaves. It means "lovely or amiable"; from erao "to love" or erastos meaning "beloved" (Strongs)
2. Erastus of Paneas was a steward (Greek: oikonomos) in Corinth, a political office of high civic status. The word is defined as "the manager of household or of household affairs" or, in this context, "treasurer." The King James Version uses the translation "chamberlain", while the New International Version uses "director of public works."
3. In 1929, an inscription mentioning an Erastus was found near a paved area northeast of the theater of Corinth. It has been dated to the mid-first century and reads "Erastus in return for his aedileship paved it at his own expense."
4. Aedile (Latin: aedilis "temple or edifice") was an office of the Roman Republic. Aediles were responsible for maintenance of public buildings and the regulation of public festivals. They also had powers to enforce public order.
5. Those seeking the position of aedile would make promises of what infrastructure they would build if selected. In addition, aediles were expected to pay the city a fee if selected. In turn the person would make his living through the taxes and fees he imposed as an aedile. It was a prestigious position and this same Erastus of Corinth is actually cited in other writings of the day.
6. Erastus was a trusted and affluent public official, appointed by the Roman emperor to oversee the financing and construction of public buildings, oversee public gathering, and keep the peace.
7. He served the Lord while in office in Corinth, and then left office to travel with Paul and company to preach the gospel.

## **I. CHRISTIANS IN CIVIL LEADERSHIP**

- A. War is contrary to the will of God. While the use of violent force may be necessary, Christ pronounces a blessing on peacemakers - Matt. 5:9
  - 1. Political leaders need to make peace with justice a priority and actively seek productive solutions to conflict - Rom. 13:3-4
- B. God designed for humankind to live in communities shaped by goodwill and cooperation treating everyone fairly.
  - 1. Lev. 19:15; 2Sam. 23:3
- C. God created us for each other, and our peace and security depends on the well-being of all nations.
  - 1. Political leaders must be aware that healthy neighbors are in our own best interests - Ex. 22:21
- D. God requires political leaders to be advocates for those who are most vulnerable in society - Ex. 18:21; Psalm 82:2-4
- E. Every human being is created in the image of God and is of infinite worth. Political leaders must promote justice for everyone - Prov. 8:15-16; Deut. 1:13
- F. The earth belongs to God and is intrinsically good.
  - 1. Political leaders must uphold our responsibility to be stewards of God's creation - Psalm 24:1, 2:10-11
- G. Christians are commanded by God to care for strangers. Political leaders must fight against bigotry - Matt. 22:39; Heb. 13:2; 3John 5
- H. Christians must care for the sick. Political leaders are actively concerned for the sick and injured - Gen. 9:6; Deut. 17:18-20
- I. Civil leaders must provide an environment that promotes moral and honorable behavior, and that discourages sin and selfish conduct - 1Peter 2:13-17
- J. Civil leaders must respect God and understand that they are answerable to Almighty God - Isa. 33:22; Acts 5:29; Dan. 4:22-27, 2:21

### **Conclusion:**

- 1. "Conservative (Christians) don't want government support for our faith, because we believe God created all consciences free and a state-coerced act of worship isn't acceptable to God. Moreover, we believe the gospel isn't in need of state endorsement or assistance. Wall Street may need government bailouts but the Damascus Road never does." (Russell D. Moore)
- 2. "God has given our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty, as well as privilege and interest of a Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers." (William Penn, founder, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania)