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God and Savior  
Who daily sustains us by His grace  
and enables us  
for the work of the Gospel



An  
Introductory and Explanatory  
Survey of the ~~English~~ Bible

New Testament Volume II

The Life and Epistles of  
The Apostle Paul

W. R. Downing

ὁ λόγος ὁ σὸς ἀλήθειά ἐστιν



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## Preface

This is the fourth volume of *An Introductory and Explanatory Survey of the English Bible*, a project now in its ninth year. God willing, this series will be completed in five volumes with the final volume surveying the General Epistles and Revelation. The Lord has graciously enabled us to continue these studies and help provide introductory works for the beginning student of the Bible.

The present volume contains a survey of the life, ministry and Epistles of the Apostle Paul. The biographical and historical sections have been taken in part from a previous work, *The Life and Labors of the Apostle Paul: a Brief Account*, published at the beginning of last year.

Many, it seems, misunderstand the nature of a Bible Survey. They expect either an extended commentary or an approach with a multiplicity of practical applications. The author has likened a Bible Survey to the digestion of food. The first step in digestion is putting the given portion of food on a plate and cutting it up in small, bite-sized pieces. Only then can it be chewed, swallowed and enter the digestive tract for final nutritional assimilation.

This is the work of a survey. It seeks to deal with the given biblical books in an introductory and coordinated fashion. It is an essential part of gaining a broad biblical base—an essential, comprehensive grasp of each book—upon which may be built a consistent and balanced Exegetical, Biblical, Systematic and Practical Theology, and a practical, consistent commentary on the various texts and subjects.

The life and ministry of the Apostle Paul are an awesome study. His influence permeates every aspect of our biblical and theological perspective. It was Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, the first formally-educated Christian and Apostle, who made Christianity the religion for the world.

May this survey prove to be most interesting and edifying, providing an adequate foundation for all further study of the Pauline Epistles.

W R. Downing

January 2019



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## New Testament Linguistic Abbreviations

The following abbreviations and explanations are used in the exegetical notes and footnotes pertaining to the Old Testament Hebrew [MT], the Septuagint [LXX] and the Greek New Testament, various reference works and biblical commentaries. These are included for this Survey and also for reference to other works.

|                    |                                                                                                                                      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ἀ                  | Aquila. A revision of the LXX.                                                                                                       |
| abl.               | Ablative case. The case of separation.                                                                                               |
| absol.             | Absolute. Used for the Gk. Gen. or Acc. Absolute.                                                                                    |
| acc.               | Accusative case. The case which relates to the direction, extent or end of action.                                                   |
| act.               | Active voice.                                                                                                                        |
| anarth.            | Anarthrous. Without the definite article. Stresses character or quality. See “Arthrous,” “def. art.”                                 |
| aor.               | Aorist tense. A punctiliar action or event. Viewing an action as a whole rather than a process.                                      |
| aor. imp.          | Aorist imperative. A command or entreaty to commence an action at once with a sense of urgency and determination. See “pres. imp.”   |
| aor. subj.         | Aorist subjunctive.                                                                                                                  |
| aor. subj. prohib. | Aorist subjunctive of prohibition. A command or entreaty to not even begin a given [anticipated] action. See “pres. imp. of prohib.” |
| Arab.              | Arabic.                                                                                                                              |
| Aram.              | Aramaic.                                                                                                                             |
| art.               | Article. Definite article. Stresses identity. See “def. art.”                                                                        |
| arth.              | Arthrous. Articular, having the definite article. Stresses identity. See “Anarthrous,” and “def. art.”                               |
| cl.                | Clause, or Class of conditional sentence.                                                                                            |
| cod.               | Codex, codices. A codex is a ms. with pages sewn together in a book form, replacing the earlier scroll form.                         |
| cond.              | Conditional, conditional sentence.                                                                                                   |
| conj.              | Conjunction.                                                                                                                         |
| const.             | Construction, with reference to various linguistic arrangements.                                                                     |
| Const. St.         | Used for Heb. words in “Construct State,” or dependent and often joined to another by <i>maqṣeph</i> (־). See “Absol. St.”           |

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Crit.          | Critical. The Critical Text, the latest Greek eclectic text.                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| D              | Latin Vulgate. C. 406 AD.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| D              | “Deuteronomic.” See JEDP.                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| dat.           | Dative case. The case of personal concern.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| def. art.      | Definite article. See “Arthrous,” “Articular.”                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| def. dir. obj. | Definite Direct Object.                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| demon.         | Demonstrative.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| dir. obj.      | Direct Object.                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| dual.          | Dual number. Heb. thought of some things as naturally existing in pairs.                                                                                                                                                                     |
| E              | “Elohistic.” See JEDP.                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| E.g.           | <i>Exempli gratia</i> , “for the sake of example.”                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| emph.          | Emphatic, emphasize.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| emph. imp.     | Emphatic Imperative. In Heb., the addition of the suffix הֵן to the imp. vb. for greater emph.                                                                                                                                               |
| emph. pos.     | Emphatic position. Inflected languages often reserve word–order for emphasis, usually placing the emphatic words or phrases toward the first of the given statement. At times the emphatic words are placed last for a culminative emphasis. |
| Eng.           | English.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Eth.           | Ethiopic Version.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| fem.           | Feminine gender.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| fig.           | Figure, figurative.                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| fut.           | Future tense.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| gen.           | Genitive case. The case of source or possession.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Ger.           | German.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Gk.            | Greek.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Heb.           | Hebrew.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| i.e.,          | <i>id est</i> , “that is.”                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| imp.           | Imperative mood. The mood of command or entreaty. See “pres. imp.” and “aor. imp.” See also “ind.,” “subj.” and “opt.”                                                                                                                       |
| imperf.        | Imperfect tense. The Gk. imperfect denotes continuous [linear] or repetitive action in time past. The Heb. imperfect denotes an incomplete action. See “perf.”                                                                               |
| ind.           | Indicative mood. Statement of fact or [presumed] reality. See “subj.,” “opt.” and “imp.”                                                                                                                                                     |
| indef.         | Indefinite.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                      |                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ind. obj.            | Indirect object.                                                                                                        |
| inf.                 | Infinitive.                                                                                                             |
| inst.                | Instrumental case. The case of means.                                                                                   |
| intens.              | Intensive. Various constructions may be used to produce an intensive expression.                                        |
| interj.              | Interjection.                                                                                                           |
| interrog.            | Interrogative.                                                                                                          |
| K, cop <sup>sa</sup> | Coptic Sahidic Version.                                                                                                 |
| K, cop <sup>bo</sup> | Coptic Bohairic Version.                                                                                                |
| κ τ λ                | An abbreviation for καὶ τὸν λοιπὸν, lit: “and the rest or remaining.” Roughly the equivalent of “etc.”                  |
| KJV, AV              | King James Version or Authorized Version of the English Bible (1611).                                                   |
| LLat.                | Late Latin.                                                                                                             |
| Lat.                 | Latin.                                                                                                                  |
| Lex.                 | Lexicon.                                                                                                                |
| loc.                 | Locative case. The case of location.                                                                                    |
| LXX                  | Septuagint. The Greek Version of the Old Testament, c. 246 BC, which is designated by the Roman Numerals for “Seventy.” |
| masc.                | Masculine gender.                                                                                                       |
| ME.                  | Middle English.                                                                                                         |
| MFr.                 | Middle French.                                                                                                          |
| mid.                 | Middle voice. The middle voice in Greek is reserved for either a reflexive or intensive expression.                     |
| MLat.                | Middle Latin.                                                                                                           |
| ms.                  | Manuscript. A hand-written document. Pl., “mss.”                                                                        |
| n.                   | Noun.                                                                                                                   |
| neg.                 | Negative.                                                                                                               |
| neut.                | Neuter gender.                                                                                                          |
| OE                   | Old English.                                                                                                            |
| OFr.                 | Old French.                                                                                                             |
| OLat.                | Old Latin. Third century. Before the Lat. Vulg. of Jerome (406 AD).                                                     |
| opt.                 | Optative mood. The mood of possibility, further removed from reality than the subj. See “subj.,” “opt.” and “imp.”      |
| Orig.                | <i>Hexapla</i> of Origen, Polyglot, c. 230 AD.                                                                          |
| part.                | Particle.                                                                                                               |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| pass.                 | Passive voice.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| per.                  | Person.                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| perf.                 | Perfect tense. The Gk. perfect tense views an action as past and the results existing into the present. The Heb. perfect denotes a completed action. See “imperf.”                                                              |
| periph.               | Periphrastic. An equitive verb construed with a participle used to emphasize a given action or state.                                                                                                                           |
| pl.                   | Plural number.                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| pluperf.              | Pluperfect tense. An action considered as extending from one time to another in the past.                                                                                                                                       |
| pos.                  | Position. Refers to word-order in either Gk. or Heb. sentence. See “emph. pos.”                                                                                                                                                 |
| poss.                 | Possessive.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| prep.                 | Preposition. These may be used either separately or intensively [the “perfective” use] in a compound word.                                                                                                                      |
| pres.                 | Present tense. An [linear] action considered as in progress from the present view of the speaker or writer.                                                                                                                     |
| pres. imp.            | Present imperative. A command to keep on doing a certain action.                                                                                                                                                                |
| pres. imp. of prohib. | Present imperative of prohibition. A command to stop something already in progress.                                                                                                                                             |
| pron.                 | Pronoun.                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| ptc.                  | Participle. A verbal adjective. The pres. ptc. can be used with a def. art. (rel. ptc.) to emphasize an outstanding characteristic. The ptc. may be used temporally with an equitive verb to emphasize a given action or state. |
| Q                     | Qumran Texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls [DSS].                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| qual.                 | Qualitative. Combined with the rel. pron., used to demonstrate a kind of person or thing.                                                                                                                                       |
| rel.                  | Relative. The rel. or arthrous ptc. is used to stress a given characteristic.                                                                                                                                                   |
| rt:                   | Root word, the basic form.                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| rest. att.            | Restrictive attributive. The repetition of the def. art. with the adj., both in the same case and gender as the preceding noun, for emphasis.                                                                                   |

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| RV, ASV             | Revised Version or American Standard Version of the English Bible (1901).                                                                                                                         |
| G, LXX              | Septuagint.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| σ,                  | Symmachus, a later literary version of LXX [c. 170].                                                                                                                                              |
| sing.               | Singular number.                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| stat. vb.           | Stative verb. A vb. that describes a state of being, condition or quality. An intransitive vb.                                                                                                    |
| subj.               | Subjunctive mood. The mood of contingency or probability, closest to reality. See “ind.,” “opt.,” and “imp.”                                                                                      |
| Syr.                | <i>Old Syriac</i> . The language of ancient Syria, an Aramaic language [Aramaean] very closely related to the Chaldee. Syriac versions are significant in the textual criticism of the Hebrew OT. |
| S, syr <sup>p</sup> | <i>Peshitta</i> or <i>Peshito</i> (“Simple”). A standardized Syrian text that dates from the early fifth century, based on earlier texts (c. 120). See “Old Syriac.”                              |
| Talm.               | <i>Talmud</i> . The written body of Jewish tradition and commentaries, comprised of the Mishna and Gemara.                                                                                        |
| θ                   | Theodotian, a 200 AD version of LXX.                                                                                                                                                              |
| TR                  | <i>Textus Receptus</i> . 1633 revision of the 1550 <i>Stephanus Text</i> with emendations from Beza’s final editions (1588–89, 1599).                                                             |
| transl.             | Translated.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| vb.                 | Verb.                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Ver.                | Version.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| v.l.                | <i>Varia Lectio</i> . A variant reading in the text.                                                                                                                                              |
| voc.                | Vocative. The case of direct address.                                                                                                                                                             |



## Introduction

This five part study on the life, labors and Epistles of the Apostle Paul forms the fourth volume of *An Introductory and Explanatory Survey of the Bible*. There are two volumes on the Old Testament and a volume on the Gospels and Acts.

This present work consists of five parts: first, an introduction to Paul, situating him in his historical context as a person, missionary and theologian. The second part is a chronology of his life and ministry in the larger context of the Roman Era of dominion over the Mediterranean world, Palestine and Jewish national life. The chronology attempts to catalogue the most important persons and events from the conquest of Jerusalem by Pompey (63 BC) to the final Bar Chokba Rebellion in 135 AD. The third part is a brief account of the life and labors of the Apostle Paul, giving what available background material can be found historically and geographically to fill out the biblical record. The fourth part is a study of the nature, order and arrangement of the Pauline Epistles. Finally, an introduction to and analysis of each Epistle.

The present work may differ from other surveys and introductions of the Apostle's life and Epistles, in that the Epistles of Paul are placed in a separate section and in their canonical order rather than inserted within the work in their chronological order. This will hopefully make it more convenient for beginning students. A cross-reference system of footnotes and page numbers coordinates the life and ministry with the various letters of the Apostle.

This study is intended for the Bible student and serious reader. As a textbook for seminary students, there are technical terms and passages in Greek and Hebrew when necessary. A lack of knowledge in these languages should not, however, keep the reader from both learning and enjoying this study of Paul's life, ministry and writings.





# Part I

## An introduction to the life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul

### A History of Men and Times

History in the ultimate sense is truly “His Story”—the story of God’s providential outworking of His eternal purpose.<sup>1</sup> This history was and is progressive in nature, centers in redemption and will culminate in the glory of the cosmic Christ (Eph. 1:7–10) and the new heavens and earth “wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Pet. 3:7–13).

As such, human history is the outworking of the eternal purpose of the Triune God through human personalities—although some, even most of these have no knowledge of the part they play in the unfolding drama of redemption. Thus, human history is largely the history of great, significant or determining personalities—some famous; others infamous, some bold and courageous; others cowardly or cruel and despicable.

Biblically, we have Adam, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses, David and the prophets—the Lord Jesus Christ who was and is the very Son of God incarnate—and the inspired Apostles.

Note: Adam was the federal head of the human race, both in original righteousness and in original sin. The Lord Jesus became incarnate as the “Second Man,” the “Last Adam.” The promise given to Adam after the Fall was an open challenge to the serpent (Gen. 3:14–15). Thus began the progressive revelation which ended with our Lord in His person and work.

Abraham became the first recipient of Divine grace and the special revelation which culminated in the coming of the Messiah and Savior. It is essential to understand that, despite Abraham’s personal failures and lack of faith at given points, the purpose of God never wavered.

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<sup>1</sup> Note Rev. 4:11. This universe was created and exists for God’s good pleasure—His sovereign, eternal and immutable purpose through which all of the Divine attributes have, are and will be exhibited to His glory through His divine providence. Gen. 1:1. Every fact in the universe is a created fact, created and defined by God.

We also have Pharaohs, Assyrian kings, Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Saul of Tarsus and Nero.

Note: The Pharaoh of the exodus, through his refusal to release Israel, providentially provided the power of God to be made known to both Israel and its enemies for centuries (Ex. 12:12; Josh. 2:9–11; 9:9; 1 Sam. 4:7–8; Rom. 9:17).

The Assyrian Monarch was raised up to punish Israel, then was judged by God (Isa. 10:5–15).

See Hab. 1:5ff. God raised up the Chaldeans to chasten Israel, then He judged the Chaldeans for their idolatrous pride. The entire prophecy of Habakkuk reveals the Divine dealings with nations in either blessing or judgment. Through the Babylonian Captivity and the subsequent Diaspora, synagogues were formed throughout the Mediterranean world and the Middle East. These, as repositories of biblical monotheism and prophetic promises, would later become missionary centers for Paul's preaching to both the Jews and Gentile proselytes.

Cyrus, the pagan Persian monarch decreed the rebuilding of the temple and Jerusalem and the return of the Jewish remnant (Isa. 44:24–45:7; 2 Chron. 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1ff; 5:121ff).

During Saul's violent persecution of Christians, they were scattered and spread the gospel (Acts 8:1, 4).

The Roman Emperors provided a stable government which provided an environment which at the first was conducive for the gospel. Paul traveled on Roman roads and, as a Roman citizen, was protected by Roman law.

Historically, we have had such men as Alexander the Great,<sup>2</sup> Columbus,<sup>3</sup> the Founding Fathers of these United States of America,<sup>4</sup> Napoleon, Churchill, Hitler and Stalin, to name but a

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<sup>2</sup> Through his conquests, Alexander spread the Greek language and culture to unwittingly and providentially prepare the world for the gospel. The Κοινή Greek was the *lingua franca* of that era.

<sup>3</sup> Columbus opened up the entire Western Hemisphere to European settlement and ultimately, the gospel.

<sup>4</sup> America, with its form of government, national prosperity and freedom of religion, has been the foremost country and nation in history for world evangelism.

few.<sup>5</sup> Academically, we have had philosophers from the pre-Socratics to the modern Existentialists.

Religiously, we have had martyrs, popes, reformers, evangelists, theologians, preachers and missionaries. Each group has had its heroes and villains, but all have had outstanding personalities whose lives, teachings, convictions, conquests and world-views were significant for the age in which they lived.

The one thing these all had in common is that they were the determining personalities of their day. Humanly speaking, the turning points of history and the destiny of nations have been determined by kings, dictators, military generals, statesmen, prophets, apostles, preachers and missionaries. Overruling all things toward its predestined end is almighty God, working for the most part unseen and unobserved through His Divine providence,<sup>6</sup> ruling and overruling the affairs of state, military expeditions, wars, treaties, persecutions, explorations, migrations, revivals and missionary endeavors. Nothing happens by chance or fate, and no one is brought to power or influence apart from Divine providence (Acts 17:24–27).<sup>7</sup>

At the center of the Divine, eternal purpose is the redemption and restoration of the image of God in man. Salvation is not merely from an eternal hell, but also from the reigning power of sin in one's present Christian experience. Those on whom God has set His eternal redemptive, loving and gracious purpose are in time and experience progressively brought to reflect the Divine moral character (1 Pet. 1:14–16) and are predestined to be conformed to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:29; 2

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<sup>5</sup> The Jewish Holocaust and anti-Semitism of World War II ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Jewish state in its homeland and its world recognition in 1948. This unlocked the prophetic agenda which had been spiritualized and even lost or denied for two millennia.

<sup>6</sup> The Apostle Paul contemplates this Divine revelation in Acts 17:22–31; Rom. 8:18–23, 28–39; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:4–7; 3:1–21; Col. 1:12–27.

<sup>7</sup> God has ordained the rise and fall of each succeeding civilization according to His predetermined purpose.

Cor. 3:17–18; 1 Jn. 3:1–3). This transforming grace is realized through the ministry of the Word. This is expressed through evangelism and missionary labor.

### The Place of the Apostle Paul in History

The Apostle Paul stands unique in Christianity. He is the one great determinative personality of the first century AD—and of every century to follow. Next to the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, the greatest incident in biblical and world history was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Damascus Road.

As the Apostle Paul, his significance and influence cannot rightly be assessed unless carefully considered in the context of biblical and world history. No one person has ever had—in the providence of God and the unfolding drama of redemption—a more profound effect than this one man. After the earthly life and ministry of our Lord, and considering the limited Jewish ministry and influence of the other Apostles, Paul was the one organizer of Christianity. Evangelism, missionary work, the institution of the church, Christian experience and theology all bear the indelible stamp of Paul.

He stands as the most amazing example of what God has done and might do in and through one human being. Wherever Reformed and Evangelical Christianity have flourished, the influence of Paul has come to the fore. His theology has been determining for Christianity. In every revival, his Epistle to the Romans has occupied a significant place.

Consider his significance in the context of the other Apostles. He lived through most of the Apostolic Era (36–68), survived only by the Apostle John. All were Jews. Although inspired and having been personally instructed by our Lord and given the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:45–47), they consisted of uneducated Galilean fishermen and a tax collector. They all retained a great measure of their native

Jewish narrowness.<sup>8</sup> Had it not been for the Apostle Paul, the Divinely-ordained Apostle to the Gentiles, Christianity might have largely remained a Jewish sect, more in accordance with Old Testament Judaism than the religion for the world, encompassing both Jew and Gentile<sup>9</sup>—the Christian religion which followed and fulfilled the “Great Commission” to the world at large. And no one was more narrow and bigoted than Saul of Tarsus, a highly educated rabbi, steeped in the Scriptures and tradition.

Paul’s conversion was complete. From a zealous, narrow, bigoted Jewish rabbi, steeped in Judaistic tradition and self-righteousness, to a fervent, intellectual yet practical Christian without any racial, national or obstructive prejudice, Paul made Christianity the religion for the world.

Finally, consider Paul in the larger context of history. On his second missionary journey he was providentially, and contrary to his original plans, led to Troas. There he received the vision to go into Macedonia, a short, two days’ sailing trip, which brought the gospel into Europe and changed forever the direction of Christianity and the character of Western Civilization—and the history of the world. The basic principles of human government, the spread of Christianity, theology, churches, practical Christian living, evangelism and missionary endeavor all reflect the personality and Epistles of this one man.

What if Paul had gone to the East instead of the West? What if he had accommodated the Jewish narrowness of the others? What if he had not written his Epistles, essentially letters on current issues, but ultimately written for the ages? What if he had

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<sup>8</sup> The Eleven remained mostly in Jerusalem and were given to a Jewish ministry. Peter’s ministry, with the exception of the message to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10:1–11:18), was to the Jews in Judea and other places, even to the large Jewish population in Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13). Paul alone was the Apostle to the Gentiles.

<sup>9</sup> Consider the influence of the Judaizers (Acts 15:1f, and the sections of Paul’s Epistles which deal with such problems), the issues which called forth his public rebuke of the Apostle Peter (Gal. 2:1–21) and the first church conference at Jerusalem (Acts 15).

not thoroughly comprehended the whole of Divine revelation and revealed it through Divine inspiration in his preaching and writings? What if he lacked the tenacity and conviction which animated him up to his dying day? What if? What if?—but this is mere speculation. God made the man: his personality, his education, his mind and tenacity, his faithfulness and his gifts (1 Cor. 15:9–10). It is not without good reason that Paul has been called “the greatest man in history.”<sup>10</sup>

### The Personality of the Apostle Paul

God leaves nothing to chance. The man He outfitted to make Christianity the religion for the world would have to be inspired and Spirit-led, be superior in intellect, educated in the various religions and philosophies of his day, thoroughly versed in the Old Testament Scriptures, a master of debate, reasoning and logic; with an inclusive and intimate grasp of the Gospel in all its ramifications doctrinally and practically—a person having a Christ-likeness which determined his character in any given situation. He would be a man able to stand before the philosophers at Athens, before rulers, kings and Caesar, able to explain the deepest mysteries of the Divine purpose—and yet pen such a passionate passage on love as 1 Corinthians 13.

Paul was both profound and practical. Though weak in body and beset with great infirmity, he was tenacious and indefatigable. He had been supernaturally prepared (2 Cor. 12:1–11) and so possessed a concept of present and future reality which animated, motivated and sustained him (2 Cor. 4:1–18). His writings reflect his utter devotion to our Lord and His truth, yet at times reveal his brilliance, wit<sup>11</sup> and literary skill or the thoughts rushing through his mind and penned with his characteristic *anacolutha*. This was the Apostle Paul, the one man fitted to take the gospel to the world.

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<sup>10</sup> See pp. 49ff for comments and quotations.

<sup>11</sup> E.g., in Paul’s kind loving, personal letter to Philemon, he makes a double play on words. Onesimus [Ὀνήσιμον] means “profitable,” and Paul writes that Onesimus “was to thee unprofitable [ἄχρηστον], but now profitable [εὐχρηστον] to thee and to me.”

## The Apostle Paul as a Missionary

The Apostle Paul was not only the greatest and most profound thinker in the history of Christianity, he was the most zealous of missionaries. In a day when the only conveyance was horse or ship, most of Paul's travels were on foot. His journeys took him from one end of the Roman Empire to the other. Paul's ministry established the New Testament principles of missionary work. They were completely consistent with the "Great Commission" and church-centered. He also kept in close contact with them through his letters and associates.

Despite his ill health, his besetting infirmities and chronic disability, he traversed more geography and preached to more antagonistic hearers than any other missionary in history. He may have established more churches than most. He kept up this obstacle-filled ministry for some twenty years, from a relatively young man to an old man, suffering at the hands of both Jews and Romans, opposed by both and yet faithful to the gospel until his life was taken by a Roman executioner.

## The Apostle Paul as a Theologian

Every aspect of Christian doctrine rests in the context of the Pauline corpus. Paul explored the whole array of Divinely-revealed truth and detailed its outworkings and practical details sufficient for both contemporary and all future generations. The major doctrinal writers of the New Testament: Peter the great Apostle to the Jews, John, who was termed the "Theologian" and Paul, whose recorded sermons, speeches and writings far surpassed either, have molded Christianity for all time.

In Paul's Epistles is worked out the theology of the Christian religion, its teaching on the Triune nature of the Godhead, salvation, the deep things of God pertaining to election, predestination and the eternal redemptive purpose, its relation to the state and interrelations within its confines, morality and love, sin and forgiveness in Christian relationships.

Paul's Christology and Pneumatology are unparalleled in New Testament writings and singularly detailed. Ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church—is set forth with authority and detail

which no other writings approach. His eschatology stands more complete than either Peter or John. In short, Paul's writings are the theology and practice of the Christian religion.

There is not a single aspect of the Christian religion which does not have the stamp of Paul upon it. Consider the two longest sentences in the Greek New Testament: Colossians 1:9–20 and Ephesians 1:3–14. The former contains 218 words; the latter, 202 words.<sup>12</sup>

This one sentence in Ephesians is inclusive of the eternal redemptive purpose from eternity to eternity—the most profound single statement in the entirety of Scripture. The terminology is compressed, the subject matter is complex and the truth revealed is astounding yet filled with encouragement for the believer. This reveals the man, the inspired Apostle, the theologian, the inspired writer who reveals the most profound truths to give practical comfort and encouragement.

### The Nature and Organization of this Study

This study is the fourth volume of a projected five-volume work, *An Introductory and Explanatory Survey of the Bible*. There are two volumes on the Old Testament and the first volume of the New Testament, which gives a general introduction to New Testament concerns and issues, then an introduction to Matthew through Acts.

This volume is concerned with the life and labors of the Apostle Paul and an introduction to his Epistles. As such, it is four-fold: first, a general introduction to Paul's significance; second, a chronology of the New Testament Era with reference to Paul's life, missionary journeys and imprisonments; third, a brief account of Paul's life and labors. This section has been previously published as *The Life and Labors of the Apostle Paul: A Brief Account*, and is included as a relevant section in this volume. Fourth, there is an assessment and arrangement of Paul's

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<sup>12</sup> See William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, p. 4. See p. 300 for a list of the extended, complex statements in Greek in the Epistles to the Ephesians and the other "Prison Prayers" of the Apostle.



Epistles according to their natural and doctrinal groupings, and finally, a general introduction to and analysis of each Epistle.

The biblical information on the life and labors of the Apostle is found in the Book of Acts, in his Epistles and in two verses in 2 Pet. 3:15–16 where Peter stated that Paul’s writings are Scripture. Luke, the author of Acts, was very selective. His interest was the spread of the gospel through the ministry of Paul. He gives a careful account of the sermon at the Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14–34), which reveals Paul’s synagogue message, while little space is given to the lengthy ministry at Corinth (Acts 18:11), and only a survey of the three years at Ephesus (Acts 18:19–21; 19:1–20:1). Yet he is very exact concerning Paul’s very short ministry at Athens, as it contains the significant address to the Areopagus and is the template for biblical, Presuppositional Apologetics (Acts 17:15–34).<sup>13</sup>

The bibliography at the conclusion of this volume lists many works on the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Those worthy of special notice must include the brief classic and concise *The Life of St. Paul* by James Stalker; the old standard and still outstanding work by W. J. Conybeare and J. S. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*.

F. W. Farrar’s massive work, *The Life and Work of St. Paul* is valuable for its details. His portrayal of Paul, however, lacks in discernment, as he presents Paul as a depressed, lonely Jew, and lacks in a comprehension of him as a Christian fully–freed from his past and an inspired Apostle, motivated by faithfulness and love to his Lord.

B. H. Carroll’s “A Survey of the Life of Paul” in his volume on Acts is invaluable and readable.<sup>14</sup> Goodwin’s *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul* is a great help, as is John Sterling’s *An Atlas of the Acts*. The various works by William Ramsay are noteworthy for their historical and geographical information, as is James Smith’s *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul*.

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<sup>13</sup> See pp. 151–154.

<sup>14</sup> B. H. Carroll, *Interpretation of the English Bible*, Vol. XII of the original 17 vol. set; Vol. VI of the new edition.

As this volume necessarily deals with the Pauline Epistles, several commentaries on each Epistle are included, as are general introductions to the New Testament. As to the former, some of the critical commentaries,<sup>15</sup> though proficient in the Greek text, lack in their presuppositions and so take much space arguing the issues of authorship, dates and other critics, past and present. Our preeminent presupposition is that the Scriptures are the inspired, inerrant, self-authenticating and thus the authoritative Word of God. It is our desire to provide substantial studies which are basic, essential, positive and edifying for the reader and student.

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<sup>15</sup> A critical commentary is not necessarily one given to biblical criticism, but essentially one which deals with the original language rather than limit itself to the English language. As the New Testament was written in Κοινή Greek, one cannot be thorough or even adequate with only a version of a translation.

## Part II

### A Chronology of the New Testament Era with Reference to Paul's Life, Ministry and Epistles

This chronology gives the inclusive era from the Roman conquest and occupation of Palestine in 63 BC to the final *Bar Kochba* rebellion in 135 AD. The life, labors and Epistles of Paul fit into the middle of this era.

The Jewish *Diaspora*, which began after the Babylonian Captivity and extended through the Persian, Greek and into the Roman eras was a settled reality by 63 BC.<sup>16</sup> The great Jewish centers were Babylon, Judea and Alexandria in Egypt. In these scattered synagogues of the west in the Roman Empire Paul would begin his evangelistic ministry in a given area. Gathering his converts, he would organize them, Jews and Gentiles, into a church of baptized believers.

This chronology, as it applies to the Apostle, has approximate dates. The dating of older and more modern scholarship differ several years in most cases. This chronology gives approximate time-frames.

Paul was about the same age as our Lord and probably died c. 68 toward the end of the Neronian Persecution (64–68). The five chronological markers, which are themselves at times approximate, are: the crucifixion (c. 30–33), the death of Herod Agrippa I (44), the expulsion of the Jews from Rome (c. 49), the

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<sup>16</sup> *Diaspora* [διασπορά], lit: “scattered abroad” (1 Pet. 1:1, “scattered,” as of seed [σπόρος], “dispersed”). From the time of the Babylonian Captivity, and the subsequent Persian, Greek and Roman Empires, Jews were increasingly dispersed throughout the known world through deportation, enslavement and later, through migration (Acts 2:1–11). Those who settled to the west in the Greco–Roman Empire had initially been deported there and eventually became merchants who lived along the trade routes and in the larger cities. The great majority of the Jewish people were of the Diaspora and were often greatly Hellenized.

arrival of Porcius Festus as Procurator of Judea (59) and the Neronian Persecution (64–68).<sup>17</sup>

### The First Part of this Era (63 BC–4 BC)

#### From the Roman Conquest to the Birth of Paul

Roman General Pompey conquers Jerusalem. End of Hasmonean Dynasty and Jewish independence (63)<sup>18</sup>

Aristobulus II, son of Alexander Jannaeus, Jewish High Priest (66–63)

Hyrchanus II, Jewish High Priest (63–40)

Judaism made a *religio licita*<sup>19</sup> (c. 63)

Roman Republic ruled by the Triumvirate of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar (60–53)

Horace, Roman poet (65–8)

The Parthians defeat Marcus Licinius Crassus at the Battle of Carthage (53)

Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra VII (51–48)

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<sup>17</sup> We are indebted to the following for chronological material: F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, II, pp. 623–627; Vincent Brushwyler, *Chronology of Paul's Life* [chart]; Frank J. Goodwin, *A Harmony of the Life of St. Paul*, pp. 7–8; W. J. Coneybeare & J. A. Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 832–838; John Sterling, *An Atlas of the Book of Acts; The Life of the Apostle Paul with timelines*, Rose Publishing; Robert Jewett, *A Chronology of Paul's Life*; James A. Billings, *Paul's Defense of His Ministry to the Corinthian Church: unpublished M.Div. thesis*.

<sup>18</sup> The Jewish Hasmonaean Dynasty, which began with the Maccabean revolt against the Seleucid Greeks, ruled an independent Jewish state from 166–63 BC. The major Jewish Sects arose during the Hasmonaean Era: the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. “Pharisee,” from the Gk. φαρισαῖοι (from the Pers. פָּרְשִׁי, “to separate”), “separated ones,” the orthodox among the Jewish sects. “Sadducee,” from. Heb. צַדִּיק (tsadiyk), “righteous.” These were the rationalists of that day. “Essene,” of uncertain origin, but possibly meant “holy ones.” These were ascetics and mystics who lived in cenobitic [monastical] communals along the Dead Sea. See Vol. II of this Survey of the Bible for the Intertestamental Era.

<sup>19</sup> *Religio licita*, a legal religion under Roman rule. This would give the early decades of Christianity a great advantage, as it was considered a sect of Judaism until the Neronian persecution.

Gaius Julius Caesar becomes dictator (45–44) Assassinated (44)  
 Ptolemy XIII and Cleopatra VII (47–44)  
 Antipater the Idumean, father of Herod the Great (93–43)<sup>20</sup>  
 Roman Republic ruled by Triumvirate of Antony, Lepidus and Octavian (43–36)  
 Ptolemy XIV (Caesar) and Cleopatra VII (44–30)  
 Herod the Great (Idumean) (40–4)  
 Parthians invade Judea (c. 40–37),<sup>21</sup> later driven out by Romans. Herod flees to Masada<sup>22</sup>  
Antigonos, son of Aristobulus II, Jewish High Priest (40–37)  
 Herodian Dynasty and rule of Judea under Rome (40 BC–70 AD)  
 Aristobolus II, Jewish High Priest (36)  
 Ananelus (restored), Jewish High Priest (36–30)<sup>23</sup>  
 Philo Judaeus, Jewish Alexandrian philosopher (30 BC–40 AD)  
 Battle of Actium (31): Mark Antony and Cleopatra Defeated  
 Egypt becomes a Roman Province (31)  
 Joshua ben Fabus, Jewish High Priest (30–23)  
 Caesar Augustus (Gaius Octavian) (27 BC–14 AD). The Roman Republic becomes the Roman Empire

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<sup>20</sup> When Julius Caesar fought Antony in Egypt, Antipater rescued Caesar with an army and was elevated to the high position of governing Palestine. This was the basis for the Herodian Dynasty, its control of that area and its rule over the Jews. There was a close connection between the Caesars and the Herods which lasted for several generations.

<sup>21</sup> The Parthian Kingdom was on the eastern border of the Roman Empire. The Herodian Kings ruled under Rome and Palestine was a buffer state between Rome and Parthia.

<sup>22</sup> Herod fled to Masada on the Dead Sea, to Idumea, then Egypt and finally to Rome. The Senate conferred on him the title “King of the Jews,” and he returned to conquer Jerusalem and reign.

<sup>23</sup> The appointment of the Jewish High Priest was political. Some of these were related to the Herodian family.

Rise of the Jewish Zealots who defied Roman Rule (c. 65 BC–70 AD)<sup>24</sup>

Horace, Greek poet (65–8 BC)

Simon ben Boethus, Jewish High Priest (23–5)

Herod's Temple Built (20 BC–25 AD)<sup>25</sup>

Matthias ben Theophilus, Jewish High Priest (5–4)

The Annunciation and Birth of John the Baptist (6–5 BC)

Herod Philip the Tetrarch, Ruler of the Northern Provinces (4 BC–34 AD)

Joazar ben Boethus, Jewish High Priest (4)

Herod Antipas, Ruler of Galilee and Perea (4 BC–39 AD)<sup>26</sup>

Eleazar ben Boethus, Jewish High Priest (4–3)

Herod Archelaus, Ruler of Idumea, Samaria and Judea (4 BC–6 AD). Deposed by Romans

The Annunciation and Birth of the Lord Jesus Christ (c. 6–4 BC)

Joshua ben Sie, Jewish High Priest (3)

The Second Part of this Era: (c. 4 BC–36 AD)

From the Birth of Paul to His Conversion

The Birth and Pre-Conversion Life of Paul (c. 4 BC–33 AD)<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> The Zealots were not an open political party, but were extremists who sought independence by revolt. One of our Lord's disciples, Simon *Zelotes* [ζηλωτής, "zealot"] (Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13), had been of this group. Even more radical were the *sicarii* [pl. of the Lat. *sica*, "dagger"], "dagger men" or assassins.

<sup>25</sup> The enlarged, beautified Temple at Jerusalem would not be completed until 60 AD, just before the Jewish War (66–70 AD), during which it was completely destroyed.

<sup>26</sup> Herod Philip and Herod Antipas were sons of Herod the Great and ruled in various parts of Judea and Galilee during the earthly life and ministry of our Lord.

<sup>27</sup> Most biblical historians and scholars hold that Paul was about the same age as our Lord.

## Early Years in Tarsus (4 BC–10 AD)<sup>28</sup>

Joazar ben Boethus, Jewish High Priest (restored) (6)

Ananus ben Seth, Jewish High Priest (6–15)

## In the Rabbinical School at Jerusalem under the tutorship of Gamaliel (10–c. 26)<sup>29</sup>

Ishmael ben Fabus, Jewish High Priest (15–16)

Eleazar ben Ananus, Jewish High Priest (16–17)

Caesar Tiberius, Roman Emperor (14–37)

Simon ben Camithus, Jewish High Priest (17–18)

Joseph Caiaphas, Jewish High Priest (c. 18–37)

Pontius Pilate, Roman Procurator of Judea (26–36)

Caligula (Gaius), Roman Emperor (37–41)

Caligula ordered his statue placed in the Jerusalem Temple  
Procrastination by Petronius and Caligula's death prevented  
this and a Jewish uprising<sup>30</sup>

The earthly life and ministry of Jesus the Christ (c. 26–33)<sup>31</sup>

The out-pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (c. 30–33)

## The Stoning and Martyrdom of Stephen (c. 34–35)

## Saul of Tarsus the Persecutor (c. 34–36)

The persecution under Saul of Tarsus scattered the Jerusalem  
believers to distant areas in every direction—the inadvertent  
spread of the gospel through persecution (c. 34–36)

The revival in Samaria under the ministry of Philip (c. 34)

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<sup>28</sup> During his earliest years, Paul was taught and trained first by his mother [age 1–5], then by his father, who also taught him the *cilicium* trade [5 years– ] and in the local synagogue school.

<sup>29</sup> The school of Gamaliel followed the more liberal and accommodating teachings of Hillel, Gamaliel's grandfather, rather than the more strict school of Shammai concerning the Oral Traditions of the Elders.

<sup>30</sup> There was continual unrest and periodic revolts among the Jews of Judea and Galilee throughout the era of Roman conquest and government (63 BC–135 AD).

<sup>31</sup> The exact dates of the earthly ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ vary by several years. Inclusive dates are given.

The Third Part of this Era: (c. 36–48 AD)  
 From the Conversion of Paul to the  
 First Missionary Journey

The Conversion and Call of Paul on the Road to Damascus (c. 36)

Three Years in Arabia (c. 36–38)

Return to and escape from Antioch (c. 38)

Paul's First Trip to Jerusalem after His conversion: His Call to be the Apostle to the Gentiles (c. 38).<sup>32</sup> The Brethren send Paul to Antioch, then Cilicia

The First Interlude: The Silent Years in Cilicia (c. 38–46)<sup>33</sup>

Paul's translation into the third heaven (c. 43?)<sup>34</sup>

Jonathan ben Ananas, Jewish High Priest (36–37)

Theophilus ben Ananus, Jewish High Priest (37–41)

Simon Cantatheras ben Boethus, Jewish High Priest (41–43)

Claudius Caesar, Roman Emperor (41–54 AD)

King Herod Agrippa I, Procurator of Palestine (41–44)<sup>35</sup>

Matthias ben Ananus, Jewish High Priest (43)

Elioneus ben Simon Cantatheras, Jewish High Priest (43–44)

Cuspius Fadus, Roman Procurator of Judea (44–46)

Martyrdom of James, the Brother of John (44)

Jonathan ben Ananus, Jewish High Priest (restored, 44)

Josephus ben Camydus, Jewish High Priest (44–46)

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<sup>32</sup> Although Divinely-called at that time, Paul would not officially take up this specific call until about a decade later at his first missionary journey. See Acts 22:17–21.

<sup>33</sup> The interlude or "silent years" of Paul's life vary from 7 to 10 years. During this time, he evidently evangelized in the area of Cilicia. Many of his sufferings at the hands of the Jews and Romans must have occurred during this early part of his ministry (2 Cor. 11:21–27).

<sup>34</sup> At least fourteen years before his letter to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 12:2) in 37 AD.

<sup>35</sup> During his short reign, Rome returned to him the lands and power of his grandfather, Herod the Great.



Herod Agrippa II (Marcus Julius Agrippa). Last of the Herodian Kings (c. 45–93)

Paul brought to Antioch by Barnabas (c. 46)

Tiberias Julius Alexander, Roman Procurator of Judea (46–48)

Ananias ben Nebedeus, Jewish High Priest (46–58)

Paul's Second Trip to Jerusalem with Barnabas with aid for the poor saints at Jerusalem (c. 47)

Rise of the *sicarii*, Jewish assassins, more extreme than the Zealots, who sought to overthrow Roman rule by violence.<sup>36</sup>

The Fourth Part of this Era: (c. 36–58 AD)

The Missionary Journeys of Paul

The Epistle of James (c. 44–46)

The First Missionary Journey of Paul: to Cyprus, Pamphylia, Phrygia, Lycaonia [Southern Galatia] (c. 48–49). In Salamis, Cyprus, Paul performs his first recorded miracle in striking Elymas blind. Sergius Paulus converted

Ventidius Cumanus, Roman Procurator of Judea (48–53)

Herod Agrippa II made King of Chalcis (48)

Claudius commands all Jews to leave Rome (c. 49)

The Epistle to the Galatians. Written to the churches of Southern Galatia (c. 49–50)<sup>37</sup>

Paul is forced to publically rebuke the Apostle Peter for his compromise which made an unnecessary distinction between Jewish and Gentile believers (c. 50)<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The *sicarii*, from *sica*, Lat: dagger. These were extreme nationalists who were also hired assassins. These were hired by Roman procurators, Jewish leaders and others. Mentioned in the Gk. text of Acts 21:38 [σικαρίων], translated “murderers.”

<sup>37</sup> This chronology is according to the more recent scholarship [the “Southern Galatian theory”]; older scholarship [the “Northern Galatian theory”] held that Galatians was written just prior to Romans (c. 57).

<sup>38</sup> This public confrontation and rebuke had to occur before the Jerusalem conference. See pp. 91–93.

The Gospel of Mark (50–55)

The Jerusalem Conference: Paul's third trip to Jerusalem (c. 50–51)

Paul and Barnabas split over John Mark. Paul and Silas depart with the blessings of the Antioch church.

The Second Missionary Journey of Paul: to Cilicia,<sup>39</sup> Galatia, Mysia, Macedonia, Greece and Ephesus (c. 51–53)

Paul stoned and left for dead at Lystra (c. 51)

Troas: the gospel enters Europe at Philippi (c. 51)<sup>40</sup>

Paul and Silas beaten by Roman lictors at Philippi (c. 51)<sup>41</sup>

Marcus Antonius Felix, Roman Procurator of Palestine (52–60)

Paul addresses the philosophical Council at Athens (c. 52)

Eighteen months' ministry at Corinth. Paul receives an encouraging vision

Epistles of 1 & 2 Thessalonians written from Corinth (c. 52–53)

Paul makes a short stay in Ephesus, leaves Aquilla and Priscilla there.

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<sup>39</sup> There is no biblical record of the establishment of the Cilician churches. These could have been planted by Paul during his "silent years" (Acts 9:28–30; 15:41).

<sup>40</sup> This short trip was the most significant in Paul's ministry, for it changed the direction of Christianity and the history of Western Civilization.

<sup>41</sup> The beating at Philippi is the only one mentioned. There were others, probably early in Paul's ministry (2 Cor. 11:24–25).

Martyrdom of Philip the Apostle (53)<sup>42</sup>

The Third Missionary Journey of Paul: Cilicia, Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece (c. 53–57)

Three years' ministry at Ephesus. The incident with Apollos. Unusual miracles performed.

1 Corinthians: Written from Ephesus (c. 56)

2 Corinthians: Written from Philippi (c. 57)

Romans: Written from Corinth (c. 57)

Jewish plot to murder Paul; a circuitous route to Troas and back to Jerusalem. Eutychus raised from the dead at Troas.

Jonathan, Jewish High Priest (58)

Continual warnings that Paul would suffer imprisonment or worse at Jerusalem.

Paul reports to the Jerusalem Church and brings the offering from the Gentile churches.

He makes his great address and gives his testimony to the huge multitude at the Temple. Paul nearly beaten to death at the Jerusalem Temple; rescued by the Roman garrison.

A further plot to murder Paul foiled. Paul sent under guard to Caerea.

The Fifth Part of this Era: (c. 58–68 AD):

Imprisonments, Final Travels and Martyrdom of Paul

The First Imprisonment of Paul (c. 58–63)

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<sup>42</sup> Although we have the biblical record of the martyrdom of James the brother of John in 44 AD (Acts 12:1–2), the deaths of the others, who all died in the first Neronian Persecution, except John, are known only through early church tradition. Such martyrdoms included most of Paul's associates and helpers.

Two Years at Caesarea (c. 58–61). Paul stands before the Sanhedrin, Felix, Festus and Agrippa II; appeals to Caesar.

The Gospel of Luke (58–61)

Ishmael ben Fabus, Jewish High Priest (restored?) (58–62)

Martyrdom of James the Just (61)

Joseph Cabi ben Simon, Jewish High Priest (62–63)

Porcius Festus, Roman Procurator of Palestine (c. 60–62)

The Gospel of Matthew (60–66)

The sailing trip to Rome. The great storm and shipwreck at Melita. Final journey to Rome.

Two Years at Rome under house arrest (c. 61–63). The “Prison Epistles” written from Rome (c. 62–63)

“Prison Epistles:” Colossians (c. 62)

“Prison Epistles:” Philemon (c. 62)

“Prison Epistles:” Ephesians (c. 62)

The Book of Acts (63)

“Prison Epistles:” Philippians (c. 63)

Paul stands before Caesar and the Praetorian Court, acquitted.

The Second Interlude: Between Roman Imprisonments: Paul travels to all his previous mission fields and also to Illyricum, Dalmatia, the Lycus Valley,<sup>43</sup> Crete<sup>44</sup> and Spain (c. 63–c. 67)<sup>45</sup>

Albinus, Roman Procurator of Judea (62–65)

Ananus ben Ananus, Jewish High Priest (63)

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<sup>43</sup> Philemon was a resident of Colossae, and Paul intended to visit this area for the first time once he was released from his first Roman imprisonment (Col. 2:1).

<sup>44</sup> Paul’s trip to Crete and the establishment of the Cretian churches there had to occur between his Roman imprisonments (Titus 1:4–5). See pp. 207–208.

<sup>45</sup> The trip into Spain had been anticipated, even before his first imprisonment (Rom. 15:24, 28).

Joshua ben Damneus, Jewish High Priest (63)

Joshua ben Gamia, Jewish High Priest (63–64)

Nero sets the city of Rome on fire and blames this incendiary act on the Christians.<sup>46</sup> The first Roman persecution of Christians (64–68)

Paul writes his “Pastoral Epistles” during his final journeys (c. 63–66) and return to prison in Rome.

“Pastoral Epistles:” 1 Timothy (c. 64)

“Pastoral Epistles:” Titus (c. 63–64)

Martyrdom of Barnabas (64)

The Epistles of 1 & 2 Peter (64–68)

Mattathias ben Theophilus, Jewish High Priest (65–66)

Phannias ben Samuel, Jewish High Priest (67–70)

The Epistle of Jude (67–68)

General Epistle: Hebrews (c. 64–66)<sup>47</sup>

The Jewish War and destruction of the Temple (66–70)<sup>48</sup>

The Final Imprisonment and Martyrdom of Paul (c. 67–68)

“Pastoral Epistles:” 2 Timothy (c. 67)

Paul martyred at Rome in early 68 at the end of the Neronian Persecution

During the Neronian persecution, early tradition states that the following were martyred: The remaining Apostles, John Mark, Aristarchus, Aquilla and Priscilla, Epaphras, Andronicus, Junia, Silas, Onesiphorus, Matthias; Prochorus, Parmenas and

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<sup>46</sup> 5 of the 7 districts of the city were burned to ashes. Nero, in his insanity, intended to rebuild Rome on a greater scale and rename it “Neropolis,” i.e., “The City of Nero,” after himself.

<sup>47</sup> Hebrews is usually placed among the General Epistles, denying the traditional Pauline authorship. This work holds Paul to be the author. See p. 391.

<sup>48</sup> Paul probably heard of the Jewish War during his last travels and imprisonment. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would end Jewish Christian narrowness and prejudice. The Judaizers, according to some historians, would later identify with Jewish sects, e.g., Ebionites, Nazarenes and Elkasites.

Nicanor [three of the first deacons of the Jerusalem Church], Trophimus, Onesimus, etc.

Nero, insane and hunted as a criminal of the state, dies in an assisted suicide (June 9, 68)

Galba, Roman Emperor (68–69)

Otho and Vitellius, Roman Emperors (68–69)

Vespasian, Roman Emperor (69–79)

Titus brings 60,000 Jewish slaves to Rome to build the Colossaeum [*Amphitheatrum Flavium*] (70–82)

The Jewish final stand of the *sicarii* and mass suicide at Masada (c. 74)

Titus, Roman Emperor (79–81)

Domitian, Roman Emperor (81–96)

The general persecution of Christians began during the reign of Domitian and continued spasmodically through the reigns of the Roman Emperors until the reign of Constantine (c. 81–330) in the Western Empire and to c. 323 in the Eastern Empire

The Gospel according to John (c. 90–95)

The Johannine Epistles (c. 90–95)

The Apostle John exiled on the Isle of Patmos (c. 95–98)

The Book of Revelation (c. 98)

Nerva, Roman Emperor (96–98)

Trajan, Roman Emperor (98–117)

Hadrian, Roman Emperor (117–138)

The final Jewish *Bar Kochbah* rebellion and end of Jewish national life (c. 132–135)<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> From the time of the Persian Empire there were repeated Jewish rebellions. The only one successful in gaining religious freedom was the Maccabean revolt. Most revolts were smaller in scope and were crushed by the existing powers (e.g., Lk. 23:18–19, 25; Acts 5:34–37; 21:38). The final *Bar-Kochba* ["Son of the Star," Numb. 24:17–19] revolt ended with the destruction of Jewish national life.

## Part III

### The Life and Labors of the Apostle Paul: A Brief Account

#### Paul the Man, the Christian and the Apostle

The Apostle Paul remains the most influential Christian in history.<sup>50</sup> Theologically, experientially and practically, he has never had a peer. His letters—he wrote most of the New Testament<sup>51</sup>—have had more influence upon Christianity than any other writings. His conversion was dramatic and unique, his call supernatural, his life legendary, his labors extraordinary and his sufferings exemplary. He preached more, traveled more and labored more abundantly than any of the other Apostles—or almost any Christian missionary since apostolic times.

In the providence of God, he opened Europe to the Gospel and determined the direction and future of Christianity, the history of Western Civilization—and the world. He became the foremost theologian and deepest thinker of the New Testament. Divine inspiration and providence lifted him higher and made him more prolific in labors than any other man. His letters have marked the character and course of world history. He remains the epitome of the grace of God worked out in an unparalleled life of service and suffering.

All of this is more amazing when it is remembered that Paul was physically a small man, beset with a debilitating, chronic, ocular disease (2 Cor. 12:7–9; Gal. 4:14–15) and evidently, a speech defect (2 Cor. 10:10). “A poor, little, afflicted, blear–

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<sup>50</sup> Dr. B. H. Carroll, first President of Southwestern Baptist Seminary, published a lecture on “Paul, The Greatest Man in History.” Cf. B. H. Carroll, *Interpretation of the English Bible*, XII, p. 169. Philip Schaff called him “...the most remarkable and influential character in history...[who]...began as a persecutor and ended a martyr...” *History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 286.

<sup>51</sup> Most scholars maintain that Luke wrote most of the New Testament in his Gospel and Acts, but if Paul wrote Hebrews, then he surpassed Luke by the equivalent of one of his shorter Epistles.

eyed, bald-headed, stuttering Jew!”<sup>52</sup> His physical infirmities and liabilities were sanctified and became subservient to the cause of Christ. Despite these he could rise to the heights of oratory with his brilliant intellect, and from his conversion onward never met his intellectual equal.<sup>53</sup>

Note: Paul’s debilitating disease was probably acute *ophthalmia*. Others think he suffered from Asiatic malaria, epilepsy or debilitating migraine headaches. After his stoning at Lystra, it is probable that he suffered such agonies as severe migraines due to the trauma of being crushed and having possible skull fractures (Acts 14:19–20).<sup>54</sup>

Is there some secret, some key to his incredible life and labors? Yes. It is at least ten-fold: first, Paul was the supreme example of the transforming, enabling, sanctifying and persevering grace of God. This he freely admitted—his life and ministry were both entirely of God’s free, sovereign, enabling and sustaining grace:

1 Cor. 15:9–10. ...I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

He was completely conquered by the gospel of the grace of God. His conversion from a bigoted, persecuting Jew to a completely subservient believer and Christian was awesome, thorough and total. No vestige of Jewish prejudice or narrowness remained. He was Christ’s willing bonds slave first and last.

Second, Paul was the most committed and Christ-like. He strove to live by and always kept a clear conscience, whether as a dedicated, bigoted, raging persecutor of Christians or an Apostle

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<sup>52</sup> B. H. Carroll, *Op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>53</sup> Paul’s intellectual prowess, eloquence and persuasiveness are marked not only in his letters, but in such encounters as his Athenian address (Acts 17:22–34) and when he dramatically turned the conversation on Herod Agrippa II and his play on words to dramatically emphasize his commitment to the gospel (Acts 26:27–29).

<sup>54</sup> See pp. 67, 69 for a description of Jewish stoning.



on trial for his life (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 26:9f; Rom. 9:1; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 13:18).<sup>55</sup> Many of the Pharisees were religious hypocrites, whom our Lord rightly and severely criticized (Matt. 23:1–23). Paul, however, was sincere and pure in his convictions and zeal, even thinking that, before our Lord arrested him,<sup>56</sup> he had achieved a blameless state before God through the legal righteousness of the Law.<sup>57</sup> One may discover, through his letters a growth in grace, even in such a life.

The key to his life, in his own words, and exemplified in his personality, labors, journeys and letters, reveals a life utterly given up to the likeness and service of the Lord Jesus—a Christ-likeness which was sorely and continually tested.

He has been called “Christ-possessed,” a man “intoxicated with Christ.”<sup>58</sup> The world, secular or religious, meant nothing to him (Gal. 6:14; Phil. 4:4–13). It must be noted that the following words were spoken in a public rebuke to the Apostle Peter in defense of the gospel of grace to both Jews and Gentiles—and nothing in his life contradicted them:

Gal. 2:20. I am crucified with Christ.<sup>59</sup> nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

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<sup>55</sup> Paul expresses himself or writes about the conscience twenty-five times, more than any other biblical writer.

<sup>56</sup> Phil. 3:10–12, Paul uses the term “apprehended [καταλαμβάνω],” which has the sense of “arrest.”

<sup>57</sup> Phil. 3:6, “...touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” The KJV does not translate the word γενόμενος, aor. mid. ptc., “having become” blameless.

<sup>58</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, p. 25. It should be noted that the most holy and godly of men in Christian history have been beset with either great physical pain, disease or opposition and adversity. Christ-likeness often seems to be the result of being utterly broken.

<sup>59</sup> Gal. 2:20, Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι, perf., “with Christ I have been and continue as co-crucified...”

Third, Paul was a man of prayer. As one who ever sought to have a clear conscience before God, he was never “too busy to pray.” He evidently kept the right priorities. As a Jew and Rabbi, he faithfully said his prayers at the stated times and in the stated way.

As a believer and an Apostle, he was given to prayer as the great priority through which he pursued his calling, his care for the churches, his fellow-laborers and his own soul-concerns (Rom. 1:9; 10:1; Eph. 1:16; Phil. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:3; Phlm. 4). He urged others to pray fervently and continually (Acts 16:16; Rom. 12:12; 15:30; 1 Cor. 7:5; 2 Cor. 1:11; 9:13–14; Eph. 6:18; Phil. 1:19; 4:6–7; Col. 4:1, 12; 1 Tim. 2:1; 4:5; 5:5; Phlm. 22), and was himself often given to a regimen of prayer and fasting (2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27).

Paul both knew and experienced the reality of a life lived in such a manner that prayer was the native impulse and attitude of his heart and mind. He could write, “Pray without ceasing.” (1 Thess. 5:).<sup>60</sup> He knew by and in his experience that the “secret” to prayer is not in prayer itself in some esoteric way, but in the life, for prayer is but the extension and expression of the life.

Fourth, Paul was the greatest sufferer. God had revealed to him through Ananias that he had been ordained to such a life (Acts 9:15–16; 2 Tim. 1:11–12). He counted his privations, sufferings and even his life as nothing compared to the cause of Christ:

Acts 20:24. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

In 2 Cor. 4:7–18; 11:21–33 he recounted his sufferings for the gospel up to that point in his ministry. He declared in Gal. 6:17, after his first missionary journey, that he bore in his scarred, permanently disfigured body, the brands [στίγματα] of a slave of Jesus, “From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my

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<sup>60</sup> 1 Thess. 5:17, ἀδιαλείπτως προσεύχεσθε, lit: “unceasingly, keep on praying.”

body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”<sup>61</sup> In Phil. 4:10–13 he revealed the lessons of grace, which had schooled him in both abundance and endurance, in both want and adversity.

Note: There were several marks of identification in the Roman Empire: first, the *stigma* was a tattoo for slaves. Those who escaped and were recaptured, branding with a hot iron. The stigma SPQR was for the military, the Roman Legionnaires. It stood for “The Senate and People of Rome.”

Second, the diploma [from διπλόω, to fold] a folded bronze certificate for retired legionnaires, granting them Roman citizenship. It was inscribed on both sides, the inside protected from wear.

Third, the diptych, again, from διπλόω, the certificate of Roman citizenship, made of wood, ivory or bronze on which was inscribed the family name, the person’s name and the names of seven witnesses. Every son born into a Roman family had to be registered within thirty days after birth. The diptych was folded with the information inside to prevent wear or damage.

Fifth, Paul was a transparent example of humility. Throughout his travels, he often daily earned his living by manual labor to provide for himself and his associates. How strange are the ways of God! “The Savior of the world a carpenter! The greatest preacher of the gospel a tent-maker!”<sup>62</sup>

He would not assert his apostolic office lest it hinder the gospel (1 Cor. 9:6–23; 15:9). He was painfully aware of his infirmities and his utter dependence upon the enabling, sustaining grace of God and the intercessory prayers of God’s people (1 Cor. 2:1–5; 2 Cor. 12:6; Phil. 1:19–20).

Note: Added to the external difficulties was his “thorn [a stake driven] into the flesh,”<sup>63</sup> a debilitating chronic condition which continually humbled him lest he should be tempted to any self–

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<sup>61</sup> Gal. 6:17, “marks,” στίγματα, Slaves were often branded or tattooed by their masters and soldiers by their commanders. The great sufferings of the Apostle—the scourges, beatings and stoning—had left him permanently disfigured with scars over his body. His identification with Christ left him scarred in the service of the gospel.

<sup>62</sup> Philip Schaff, *Op. cit.*, p. 320.

<sup>63</sup> 2 Cor. 12:7, σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί, a sharp stake, large sliver of wood.

exaltation or pride (2 Cor. 12:7–10). This was probably *ophthalmia* [*ophthalmitis*], a debilitating, grotesque inflammation of the eyes, a known disease of that era. Various references seem to support this, i.e., his physical appearance, his personal handwriting, his comments about his eyes and his use of amanuenses through whom he dictated his letters (Rom. 16:22; Gal. 4:15; 6:11; 2 Cor. 10:10).

Paul termed it “a messenger of Satan,” implying a spiritual origin under the sovereign permission of God to keep him humble. This may have stemmed from his blinding conversion encounter. Some have opined that he may have had to be led by the hand at times due to this malady. Consider the difficulties in working Cilicium with this condition, trying to write and facing the public or his hearers.

Sixth, Paul’s personality and demeanor. He was completely given to the life and ministry to which God called him—a life of service, suffering and opposition (Acts 9:16). Yet he was evidently cheerful, positive and encouraging in his personality and demeanor. He was a man at peace with himself and his circumstances in the context of Divine providence (Rom. 5:2; 12:9–15; Phil. 1:18; 2:16–18; 4:10–13; 1 Thess. 5:16). He constantly urged his readers to “Rejoice evermore, and again I say, Rejoice!” (Phil. 3:1, 3; 4:4). He urged them to set their minds on positive things from a true, consistent Christian perspective (Phil. 4:6–9).

Such urging and encouragement could never come from a personality given to melancholy and depression. In the very worst of circumstances, he remained steadfast and was not given to complaint; he was truly mindful of heaven and future glory (2 Cor. 4:7–18; 11:16–33), and captivated by a sense of God’s covenant love to himself and to all of God’s people. He preached a true Christian love from one believer to another (Rom. 12:9–10, 16; 1 Cor. 13:1–13).

Seventh, Paul was the first educated Christian and Apostle. The other Apostles were uneducated fishermen and a tax collector. He was a former Jewish Rabbi and a fervent Christian whose mind and heart were steeped in Scripture. His writings reveal his background in Old Testament exegesis, hermeneutics, reasoning and rhetoric. He knew almost the whole of Scripture by

heart and often quoted even obscure passages from the Law, the Prophets and the Writings from memory in either the Hebrew or the LXX, and through Divine inspiration lifted them to their New Testament fullness and gospel interpretation.

As a rabbi, he was educated in Greek philosophy. Paul was completely in his element before the *Areopagus* at Athens when he faced the Greeks and presented Christianity as a world view—the first intellectual confrontation between biblical Christianity and Greek philosophy. This was Paul at his best, not his worst. No other Apostle could have presented this amazing, comprehensive and decisive address—the most significant words ever spoken in Athens.

Eighth, Paul was ordained by our Lord as the great missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 21:19; 22:17–23; 26:20; Rom. 11:13; 15:16; Gal. 2:2, 8; Eph. 3:8; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 4:17). The other Apostles were essentially limited to a Jewish ministry, although through Peter, the door to the Gentiles was first opened (Acts 10:1–11:18). Paul was a highly educated Jewish rabbi, steeped in Scripture and yet freed by Christ from all religious and cultural prejudice, fluent in Greek and well-studied in the philosophies and religions of his time.

Further, he was a Roman citizen, and so in every way a man of status and fitted for the world. “As a Hebrew, he faced all Jews. As a Hellenist, he faced all Greeks. As a Roman citizen he faced the world.”<sup>64</sup> It was left to Paul to make Christianity the religion for the world.

Ninth, Paul was the epitome of being truly heavenly-minded, i.e., he counted the sufferings of his present life as little or nothing compared to heaven and future glory. After listing the sufferings and obstacles of his ministry, he concludes with his perspective:

2 Cor. 4:17–18. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things

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<sup>64</sup> B. H. Carroll, *Op. cit.*, pp. 175–176.

which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.

Rom. 8:16–18, 22–23. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.... For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption,<sup>65</sup> *to wit*, the redemption of our body.

Our Lord Jesus and Peter both used the term “exodus” [ἐξοδος] when referring to physical death (Lk. 9:31; 2 Pet. 1:5). Paul used the term ἀναλύω, “to loosen,” which can be paraphrased “to pull up stakes.” He had a continuing, all-encompassing desire to “pull up stakes” and to be with Christ which is “much more better!”<sup>66</sup>

Finally, Paul was the most tenacious in perseverance—this in spite of his physical infirmities, the bodily suffering from his beatings, stoning, imprisonments, continual life-threatening circumstances and his chronic disease (2 Cor. 11:22–33; 12:7–10; Gal. 4:15). He was a purpose-driven, visionary man—yet intensely practical in his ministry. His epitaph, paraphrased from the Gk. to express the word-order and perf. tenses, reveals his determined tenacity:

2 Tim. 4:6–7. For I am now ready to be offered [my life—blood poured out as a libation] and the time to finally pull up stakes is at hand. The good fight I have fought without slacking up to the very last, my course I have finished without flagging, the faith I have kept without compromise.

### The Nature of this Introductory Study

Countless great and classic volumes have been written on the life and labors of the Apostle Paul, the age in which he lived; the

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<sup>65</sup> Rom. 8:23, υἱοθεσίαν ἀπεκδεχόμενοι, *emph. pos.* “Placing as a son, reaching one’s majority,” standing before the universe in resurrection glory.

<sup>66</sup> Note the Gk. of Phil. 1:20–23. See also 2 Tim. 4:6.

religious, philosophical and political background and the cultures of his day; the topography of his travels, the doctrinal controversies and spiritual battles.

This work is at best a very basic introductory sketch which intends to expand the foregoing chronology and give sufficient details to bring an element of life and coherence to Paul's life and ministry. It is a brief attempt to draw a picture for the mind's eye to help visualize his travels, experiences and the culture in which he lived and labored.

The biblical information on the life and labors of the Apostle is found in the Book of Acts, in his Epistles and in two verses in 2 Pet. 3:15–16 where Peter stated that Paul's writings were Scripture. Luke, the author of Acts, was very selective. His interest was the spread of the gospel through the ministry of Paul.

He gives a careful account of the sermon at the Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14–34), which reveals Paul's synagogue message, while little space is given to the lengthy ministry at Corinth (Acts 18:11), and only a survey of the three years at Ephesus (Acts 18:19–21; 19:1–20:1). Yet he is very exact concerning Paul's very short ministry at Athens, as it contains the significant address to the Areopagus (Acts 17:15–34).

The bibliography at the conclusion of this volume lists many works on the life and ministry of the Apostle Paul. Those worthy of special notice must include the brief classic and concise *The Life of St. Paul* by James Stalker; the old standard and still outstanding work by Conybeare and Howson, *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*.

### The Birth and Early Childhood of Saul (c. 4 BC–10 AD)

[Harmony: Acts 21:39; 22:3; 22:27–29; 26:5–12;  
Gal. 1:16–17; Phil. 3:4–6]

The approximate dates for the birth of Saul vary from 6 BC to 5 AD. Most assume from both biblical and extra-biblical evidence that he was about the same age as our Lord.

The world into which Saul was born was Roman, the culture, Greek, and his home and religion, strictly Jewish. He would be a

man providentially prepared from the womb for his life's great, incomparable work. It would be years, however, and take a mighty, transforming work of Divine revelation and grace to realize this in his conversion and call (Acts 9:1–16; Gal. 1:15–16).

Saul was born in the city of Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia,<sup>67</sup> which was part of the greater area of Asia Minor on the far eastern Mediterranean coast. He was a Jew of the *Diaspora*.

The Province of Cilicia was topographically and demographically divided into two parts: Rough Cilicia, or the northwestern highlands and mountainous region which was historically the home of pirates and marauding bandits, and Flat Cilicia to the southeast, with its fertile lowlands. The entire region had witnessed centuries of conflict with notable battles by Persian, Greek and Roman armies.

Tarsus itself was located twelve miles from the Mediterranean Sea at the mouth of the Cydnus [Tarsus] River. It was a great metropolitan city and a bustling port for the timber trade, linen, *Cilicium* and other goods. It stood at the Cilician Gates, a narrow pass on the Gökölük River between the highlands of the Anatolian Plateau and the low plains of Tarsus to the south.<sup>68</sup> It stood at the confluence of the East and the West, a mixture of Greco–Roman civilization and Oriental religions and culture.

Tarsus was one of the three great university cities of the Greco–Roman Empire: Tarsus in Cilicia, Athens in Greece and Alexandria in Egypt. In some ways, Tarsus outshone the other two for its learning and importance. Its native dialect was Phoenician; its culture and the *lingua franca* was Greek. Latin was common due to the academic and governmental influence.

Note: *Lingua franca*, derived from the Latin, is a term referring to a common language among peoples of different languages for

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<sup>67</sup> Tarsus, now a smaller, Muslim city, is located in south–central modern Turkey.

<sup>68</sup> At least fifty famous battles were fought at this strategic location in Persian, Greek and Roman history.



commerce and social exchange. Historically, it refers to a mixture of Italian with French, Greek, Arabic, and Spanish, formerly used in the Levant or the area of Syro-Palestina from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries.

As to its government, it was a free city [*Urbs Libera*], not a *Municipium* [a city incorporated into the Roman state] or *Roman Colonia*, as was Philippi. There were no Roman garrisons stationed there, only Roman magistrates and officials.

As most Greco-Roman cities, Tarsus was given to paganism with all its pageantry, immorality, idolatry and excesses. Here, Saul was destined to spend his early years to at least the age of twelve or thirteen. Either here or in his later travels, he would have witnessed and been exposed to the tragic state of the Gentile world in its wickedness, immorality and perversion as he describes it in Romans 1:18–32.

Saul was born into a strict Jewish family. He described himself as “a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee,” living by the strictest sect of Judaism (Acts 23:6; 26:5; Phil. 3:5–6), “an Hebrew of the Hebrews,” from the Tribe of Benjamin, one of the two faithful Tribes of the Southern Kingdom (Phil. 3:5).<sup>69</sup>

Although a Jew of the *Diaspora*, and living in a Greco-Roman metropolis, he was not fully a Hellenist, except in his mastery of the Greek language and knowledge of Greek customs. His father had evidently rendered some great service to the Emperor or a great General, and so was granted Roman citizenship. Thus, Saul was free-born (Acts 22:25–28), and probably of the higher social class. Nothing is known of his mother, except that she was a Hebrew (Gal. 1:15; Phil. 3:5; Rom. 16:13) and had other children.

There are several references to Paul’s siblings and near-relatives, including a sister and a nephew (Acts 23:16ff).<sup>70</sup> Some

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<sup>69</sup> Phil. 3:5, Ἑβραῖος ἐξ Ἑβραίων. This points to Paul’s undiluted Hebrew blood in his lineage from both the paternal and maternal sides of his family.

<sup>70</sup> As his sister and nephew divulged the plot against Paul to save his life, we assume that they had previously been converted.

of these had been converted to Christianity—and at least two before his own conversion (Rom. 16:7, 11, 13, 21). Had this been known to him in his early days as a persecutor, it would have added to his antagonism against Christians.

He was named “Saul” [שאול, “asked for”] at his circumcision,<sup>71</sup> after the first king of Israel, who was also from the Tribe of Benjamin. As most Jews of the Greco-Roman culture, and especially those of the Diaspora, he had two names and a third as a Roman citizen. “Paullus” [“small, humble”] was his Latin name and Παῦλος his Greek name and Latin equivalent. His Hebrew name was dropped by Luke during the first missionary journey and his Greek name used, a fitting designation for the missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 13:9).<sup>72</sup>

According to strict Jewish tradition, a father had a three-fold obligation to his son: first, to circumcise him, this being the covenant-sign of Judaism; second, to teach him the Law; and third, to teach him a trade. The Rabbis stated that not to teach a son a trade was to teach him to be a thief.

Saul was taught the family trade of making various coverings i.e., he became a “tent maker”<sup>73</sup> or worker of *cilicium*, a dark fabric made from goat’s hair for which the region of Tarsus was famous. It is also possible that “Luke, the beloved physician” also plied his skills for the support of the work, as well as ministering to Paul as his personal doctor (Col. 4:14).

Note: Every Jewish man had to learn a trade. Even Rabbis [as distinct from the priests and Levites in Jerusalem], though religious leaders and teachers, did not take money or were not recompensed for their position, office or religious duties. They had to earn a living as did others. This trade would enable Paul in later years to be self-sufficient and self-supporting in his

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<sup>71</sup> Although some sons were named before their birth (Matt. 1:21; Lk. 1:13, 31), Jewish custom dictated that a son was usually named at his circumcision on the eighth day (Lk. 2:21).

<sup>72</sup> From his conversion onward, or looking back upon his previous life from a Christian perspective, this work will use the name “Paul.”

<sup>73</sup> Acts 18:3, “tent makers” σκηνοποιοί, workers in *cilicium*, which was used in various coverings, eg., tents, mantles, shoes, etc.

missionary endeavors and to help support his associates in the ministry (Acts 18:3; 20:33–35; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:6–8).<sup>74</sup>

It is the practice of modern Christianity to financially support both ministers and missionaries if possible. We would never send a foreign missionary from our churches without some stated financial support. The Scripture intimates such support, based on the Levitical system and the Law (1 Cor. 9:6–18), but Paul would not use this so that no one could claim that he took advantage of those to whom he ministered (1 Cor. 4:10–12; 9:6–15; 2 Cor. 11:7–12). His trade enabled him to be self-supporting, as were the Rabbis.

He did greatly appreciate the support of a church when it was given out of love and concern (Phil. 4:10–19), and the early Christian churches helped one another in times of famine and great need (Acts 11:27–30; Rom. 15:25–28; 1 Cor. 16:1ff). Paul helped in this for the sake of Christian compassion and also for another reason: to demonstrate the genuineness of the Gentile believers to the Jewish church at Jerusalem.

During his early youth at Tarsus, Saul may have worked with his father in their *Cilicium* trade in the *agora*. Thus, from age five to twelve, his father doubtless schooled him in both the written Law and the “Tradition of the Elders” or the “Oral Law.”

He attended the local synagogue school and may have witnessed and heard much in the *agora*, including the various academics, philosophers and rhetoricians.<sup>75</sup> Either during this time or possible later—if he did attend the university for a time after his conversion and return to Tarsus—he was exposed to the teachings, sayings and orations of the Greek philosophers and

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<sup>74</sup> Note 1 Tim. 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” In the final clause, “rightly dividing” [ὀρθοτομοῦντα] refers to “cutting a straight line”—a tailor’s term. A. T. Robertson, referring to Paul’s vocation: “Paul knew how to cut a straight line.”

<sup>75</sup> The *agora*, or marketplace was also the civic center, with not only government presence, but also the place for public discourse, the practice of rhetoric and the haunt of the philosophers and teachers of the various schools.

rhetoricians. As a student of Gamaliel in Jerusalem, preparing for his life and ministry as a Jewish Rabbi, it was necessary to study the various Greek philosophies to be able to defend his Jewish religion.

### The Pre-Conversion Life of Saul at Jerusalem (c. 10–26 AD)

[Harmony: Acts 22:27–29; 26:5–12; Gal. 1:16–17; Phil. 3:4–6]

Ancient Jewish education for a son began in the home with the mother from infancy to age five. If a Pharisee, he then learned the essentials of Jewish history, the Law, both written and oral, and the Tradition of the Elders from his father while he learned a trade from the age of five onward. There was also the Synagogue School where instruction was given by the local rabbis and elders. This was the extent of an average man's education.

Those destined for the rabbinical office trained in Jerusalem. The usual age was thirteen until manhood. Thus, Saul traveled to and remained in Jerusalem from his early teenage years to manhood. As the Jews made yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem for the major feasts, and because Tarsus was relatively close, his family may have met with him on these occasions.<sup>76</sup>

The *Tannaim* phase of Judaism (c. 20 BC–15 AD) produced two schools of rabbinic thought. The rabbinical system were of the two schools of Hillel and Shammai. The latter was very strict concerning both the Mosaic and Oral Laws; that of Hillel was more liberal and accommodating. Paul studied in the rabbinical school of the Hillel tradition.<sup>77</sup>

Paul declared to the multitude at Jerusalem in his defense that he “was brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel and

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<sup>76</sup> Because of traveling conditions, especially sea voyages, the Jews of the Diaspora sought to make the great Feast of Pentecost; Passover being early in the year when sailing was more dangerous, and *Yom Kippur* late in the sailing season. Traveling overland from Cilicia to Jerusalem did not necessarily include sea travel.

<sup>77</sup> For a short discussion of Hillel and Shamai, see Vol. II of the author's *Survey of the Bible*, pp. 440–441.

taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day” (Acts 22:3).

Gamaliel was one of the greatest Rabbis of the Hillel tradition and was himself the grandson of Hillel [Hillel the Elder, whose son was Simeon ben Hillel]. Gamaliel was one of the very few who had the coveted title *Rabban* [“Master”], and was the most esteemed Doctor of the Law in that era. His honored title was “The Beauty of the Law.”<sup>78</sup>

Gamaliel’s authoritative address to the Sanhedrin concerning the Apostles, early believers and the self-credentialing miracles and signs which were done, reveals amazing discernment and wisdom (Acts 5:34–40). It is certain, however, that his former pupil, Saul of Tarsus, would and could not agree!

The Rabbinical Schools were located in Jerusalem, where the students lived with the teacher.<sup>79</sup> They literally sat at the feet of the Rabbi when school was in session. The subjects taught, discussed and debated were the Mosaic Law, the unwritten Oral Law, the Tradition of the Elders and, for the school of Hillel, the *Haggadah*, *Halachah*,<sup>80</sup> and the various philosophies of the Greco–Roman world.

Note: Jewish rabbis were studied in the various philosophies of the Greco–Roman world. Paul may have spent some time at the university in Tarsus. In his letters, there are at least fifty quotations or allusions to classical writers. For examples, see 1 Cor. 15:33, the section on Paul at Athens in this volume and also

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<sup>78</sup> Many of the leading Rabbis held titles. Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin who came to our Lord by night, was known as “The Teacher of Israel”—his title [ὁ διδάσκαλος τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ]. Jn. 3:10.

<sup>79</sup> Our Lord and His Disciples, living together as a group during His earthly ministry and teaching were following the traditional teacher–disciple relationship.

<sup>80</sup> The two extra–biblical bodies of writings and oral tradition were the *Haggadah* and the *Halachah*. The former consisted of various legends based on Scripture from which students would discuss and debate certain points and draw conclusions. The latter consisted of rules and precedents pertaining to legal matters from which were drawn a system of casuistry.

Farrar, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 630–639. This author must be read carefully due to his erroneous views concerning Paul.

Saul studied the Scriptures in both the Hebrew [Aramaic] and the LXX, and was trained in logic, reasoning and debate.

Note: The Classical Hebrew of the Scriptures ceased to be spoken by the time of the Babylonian Captivity. The “Hebrew” language in the New Testament was the Aramaic. But Paul studied the Scriptures in the original, classical Hebrew, the Aramaic and the Septuagint [LXX] or Greek version in the Rabbinical school. He evidently also spoke Latin, and some Latinisms occur in his Epistles.

He stated concerning himself that he was an outstanding and zealous pupil (Gal. 1:14). The Sanhedrin would later agree when it authorized him as the first inquisitor against the Christians.

Was Saul a married man and a member of the Sanhedrin?<sup>81</sup> Among the requirements for membership in this elite, ruling, religious body was that a man must be at least thirty years of age and be married; indeed, marriage was looked upon as a religious obligation for every Jewish man. Women were traditionally married at age thirteen and men from fifteen to twenty years of age.<sup>82</sup>

Paul states that when the Christians were put to death, he gave his “voice” against them, referring to an official vote of a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 26:10).<sup>83</sup>

Note: The Sanhedrin was the supreme Jewish Court consisting of seventy of the ruling elders of Israel, and comprised of both Sadducees and Pharisees. Its president [*Nas*] was the High Priest. It traditionally traced itself back to the days of Moses and the seventy elders (Numb. 11:24–25), but was in reality an institution of the Restoration and Second Temple Era.

He was already a member of this religious Supreme Court, or was made so upon the stoning of Stephen. As he later classifies

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<sup>81</sup> See a discussion of this body in Vols. II and III of the author’s *Survey of the Bible*.

<sup>82</sup> See Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*, p. 147.

<sup>83</sup> Acts 26:10. The term “voice”, ψῆφον, refers to a smooth, round stone which was cast as an official vote in the Sanhedrin.

himself with widows and widowers, some scholars assume that he was a widower whose wife had died early in their marriage.

Saul finished his rabbinic education and evidently returned to Cilicia during our Lord's public ministry (c. 26–30), as there is no record of their meeting—and he would have proved to be a vocal opponent and an out-spoken critic. Saul would return shortly after our Lord's passion, resurrection and ascension, perhaps at one of the great feasts, and with Christianity beginning to make itself known, remained and became a leading rabbi in the Synagogue of the Libertines and Cilicia (Acts 6:7ff).<sup>84</sup>

### The Debate with and Stoning of Stephen (34–35)

[Harmony: Acts 6:9–14; 7:58–59; 22:20; 1 Cor. 15:9; 1 Tim. 1:13]

The early years of Christianity, even after the giving of the “Great Commission” by our Lord (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46–49), and the out-pouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–47), remained strictly Jewish. Peter would later open the door to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius after the Lord gave him a transforming vision (Acts 10:1–11:18).

During this early time, Christianity, “The Way,” or the “Sect of the Nazarene” (Acts 9:2; 19:23; 22:4; 24:5, 14, 22; 28:22) was simply considered an aberrant Jewish sect which was deceived, following the teachings of a false Messiah, a Galilean named “Jesus of Nazareth,”<sup>85</sup> who was crucified, and whom his followers maintained had risen from the dead.

Due to favoritism of the “Hebrew” widows and the neglect of the “Grecian” widows in the Jerusalem Church, the office of

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<sup>84</sup> “Libertines,” Λιβερτίνων, refers to freed men, and did not refer to questionable morality. Paul as a Roman citizen would qualify. He was also from Cilicia (Acts 21:39; 22:25–29).

<sup>85</sup> Our Lord was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of prophecy (Mic. 5:2; Lk. 2:1–7), but His Galilean accent marked him as an imposter to the Jewish leaders, who never asked concerning His birthplace. It is noteworthy that the Apostles used our Lord's Nazareth connection in their public preaching (e.g., Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10).

deacon was established.<sup>86</sup> The seven deacons were all Hellenists, as all were known by Greek names. It is significant that the church chose the most spiritual, able and generous men. This is the first mention of young Stephen, a Jewish Hellenistic believer and deacon.

The Christians were persecuted first by the Sadducees, because the latter denied the doctrine of the resurrection which these early Christians were preaching (Acts 4:1–2, 23). The Pharisees, holding to the doctrine of the resurrection, did not become involved until the ministry of Stephen. He was an evangelist as well as a deacon, and made great inroads into the numbers of Sadducees, priests and Pharisees as he preached in the synagogues around Jerusalem and was performing notable signs and miracles (Acts 6:7–8).

This consternation led to a debate with the leaders of the Libertine and Cilician synagogue. They were not able to refute his wisdom, arguments or counter the power of the Spirit speaking through him. Young Saul of Tarsus,<sup>87</sup> one of the leading rabbis and most intelligent and zealous among them, was utterly defeated for the first time and lost the debate.

The result was the raising of false witnesses to charge young Stephen with the heresy of speaking against Moses and the Temple—the worst possible blasphemy. Stephen was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. They beheld his countenance as he was filled with the Spirit of God. His sermon was a recounting of Israel's history and its blatant unbelief. His application was devastating:

Acts 7:51–56. Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of

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<sup>86</sup> The term "Grecian" was of broad designation. It could have meant "Greeks" or Jews who had adopted Greek customs: "Hellenists," here, of the latter. The "Hebrews" were Aramaic-speaking Jews who strictly retained Jewish customs.

<sup>87</sup> "young," νεανίας, used of men from the age of twenty–four to forty [Thayer]. Saul was in his mid–to late thirties.



the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

They rushed upon him, gnashing their teeth in their madness and rage. They drew him out of the city and stoned him to death on charges of blasphemy and worshipping a false prophet. It was, in reality, a lynching by enraged religious zealots.

Note: The Jewish method of stoning, according to the Mishna. The witnesses were the first to stone the convicted person (Deut. 17:7). When ten cubits from the place of stoning, they say to him, 'Confess: for it is the custom of all about to be put to death to make confession; and everyone who confesses has a share in the world to come.' Four cubits from the place, the convicted is stripped of his clothing.

One of the witnesses would push the convicted from behind, face down, from a precipice twice the height of a man. He would then be turned face up. The first witness would cast a heavy stone upon his chest [heart]. If he were still alive, the whole company would then stone him to death, using the heaviest stones they could lift.<sup>88</sup> Paul himself was once stoned by the Jews and left for dead at Lystra (Acts 14:19–20).

Those involved in the stoning laid their outer garments at the feet of young Saul of Tarsus, who stood as one of the leaders. The persecutor and the martyr had met. One watched the other die with a prayer of forgiveness upon his lips and a voice lifted up to the Lord Jesus in glory, then calmly falling asleep in death. The persecutor won; the martyr died.

But the impression of Stephen never left Paul. His words and prayer would not only haunt Saul, they would form the general approach of Paul's own ministry and Stephen's words would be echoed in Paul's sermons in synagogues throughout the Diaspora

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<sup>88</sup> See F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 170–171; McClintock & Strong, *Cyclopedia*, IX, pp. 1047–1048.

and find their way into his letters.<sup>89</sup> Augustine well said that, “We owe the conversion of Paul to the prayer of Stephen.”

### Saul’s Systematic Persecution of the Jerusalem Church (34–36)

[Acts 8:1–3; 9:1ff; 22:4–5; 26:9–11; 1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:13]

Religious persecution is always the final solution when mere formal religion meets with the truth of God lived out in the lives of true converts. The first human blood shed was due to religious persecution (Gen. 4:1ff; 1 Jn. 3:10–13). The persons may vary throughout history; the method ever remains the same. There is no hatred as vile, hypocritical and deceitful as religious hatred.

The previous persecution by the Sanhedrin had failed to hinder the spread or zeal of these early disciples. The ministry, trial and stoning of Stephen united both the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sanhedrin, which before had been seemingly lax and divided, now sought to exterminate Christianity by every possible means.

The Roman procurator, Pilate (26–36), was recalled to Rome and an interim government before the establishment of Marcellus (36–38) evidently gave the Sanhedrin free reign, the governmental powers considering this to be a religious matter.<sup>90</sup>

Saul became the first inquisitor. His strict religious conscience and legal self-righteousness, exhibited as unabated, murderous, religious zeal, necessitated the extermination of these blasphemous followers of a suffering, crucified, false Messiah. He was far-sighted. To retain the old order—the religion of the Scriptures as he knew them and the Tradition of the Elders—this new movement had to be crushed and utterly destroyed. His fury knew no bounds—and no believer was exempt. Both men and women were arrested, imprisoned, flogged and put to death.

Note: Roman scourging and Jewish flogging were distinctly different. The former was intended to prepare the person for

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<sup>89</sup> Paul, as a member of the Sanhedrin, heard the entire sermon of Stephen, and evidently recounted it to Luke for his record in Acts.

<sup>90</sup> Pilate himself had crucified some 36,000 Jews during his ten-year tenure as Governor.

death and was in itself lethal; the latter was intended to bring the person to repentance.

Roman Scourging was the legal preliminary to every execution. A short whip [Lat: *flagrum*] with several leather strands of unequal length having sharp sheep bones and iron balls at their ends was used to lacerate and rip the skin and tissue from the back, buttocks and legs of the condemned. The scourging was methodical up and down each side of the back to the legs.

The brutal procedure left the skeletal bones exposed. The resulting tissue damage and blood loss left the person close to death and would determine the time spent crucified on the cross. The person was not expected to survive such torture.

For lesser crimes under Roman Law, the person was beaten with rods by the lictors. These, as officers of the magistrates, carried a bundle of elm rods tied with a red thong and an axe in the middle of the bundle with the blade protruding—the *fasces*. The axe for capital punishment; the rods for corporal punishment.

The clothes were stripped off, the red leather thong would be used to tie the person, then the beating would commence up and down the back and legs. Unlike the Jewish flogging, which could not exceed forty stripes, there was no limit to the beating. The beating left the person badly bruised and bleeding with possibly broken ribs. Cf. the “many stripes” laid upon Paul and Silas at Philippi (Acts 16:22–23). Paul was thus beaten three times (2 Cor. 11:25).

The Jewish method of flogging, according to the *Mishna*: The upper body of the subject was stripped bare of all clothing and his hands tied to a stake. Three judges participated. With a scourge of two thongs the executioner, with all the force of one hand, struck the subject thirteen times on the chest, thirteen times on the right shoulder, and thirteen times on the left.

While the subject was being beaten, the chief judge would read aloud Deut. 28:58–59, then Deut. 29:9, finally Ps. 78:38–39. A second judge would count each stroke and the third would declare ‘Strike him!’ before each blow. The limit was thirty-nine strokes.<sup>91</sup> Paul himself was scourged five times by the Jews and also beaten with rods three times, the Roman punishment performed by Lictors (Acts 16:20–23; 2 Cor. 11:23–25).

Note: The Jewish method of capital punishment was by stoning, burning, hanging [usually the corpse was later hanged under a

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<sup>91</sup> Quoted from the *Babylonian Talmud* by Robert L. Reymond, *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

curse] or beheading by the sword.<sup>92</sup> The Roman method for criminals was crucifixion. Roman citizens were exempt from such a horrible death. Paul, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded under the Neronian persecution.

Even the sanctity of the home was violated (Acts 8:3), and many children were no doubt orphaned. Any doubts he may have had “he washed away with blood.” In Saul was first fulfilled the prophecy of our Lord:

Jn. 16:1–3. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me.

In the words of Luke and in his own words, Paul later recalls the fury, vehemency, violence and madness with which he sought to exterminate these early believers:

Acts 8:1, 3. And Saul was consenting unto his death.<sup>93</sup> And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.... As for Saul, he made havoc [ἐλυμαίνετο]<sup>94</sup> of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.

Acts Acts 9:1–2. And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter [ἐμπνέων ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόνου]<sup>95</sup> against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2 And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Gal. 1:13. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted

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<sup>92</sup> *Jewish Encyclopedia*; McClintock & Strong, *Op. cit.*, VIII, p. 788.

<sup>93</sup> Acts 8:1, ἦν συνευδοκῶν. periphras. pres. ptc. in a continual state of hearty approval. Such is wicked blindness of graceless, religious self-righteousness.

<sup>94</sup> ἐλυμαίνετο, imperf. a continual action. Used of the ravaging and devastation caused by a wild boar. See the LXX of Ps. 79:14.

<sup>95</sup> ἐμπνέων ἀπειλῆς καὶ φόνου, Strong words. They reveal Saul's reason for living, for drawing breath: to murder believers.

[ὑπερβολὴν ἐδίωκον] the church of God, and wasted [ἐπόρθουν] it.<sup>96</sup>

Acts 22:4. ...I persecuted this way unto the death [τὴν ὁδὸν ἐδίωξα ἄχρι θανάτου], binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.<sup>97</sup>

Acts 26:9–11. I verily thought with myself, that I ought [δεῖν] to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished [τιμωρῶν] them oft in every synagogue, and compelled [ἡνάγκαζον] them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad [περισσῶς τε ἐμμαινόμενος] against them,<sup>98</sup> I persecuted them even unto strange cities.<sup>99</sup>

1 Tim. 1:13. Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious [ὕβριστήν]: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.<sup>100</sup>

How long did this devastating persecution last and how far did it extend? The Jerusalem Church was scattered in every direction, except the Apostles. These had already been tried before the Sanhedrin, beaten, threatened and released (Acts 4 and 5). They were providentially preserved, but the members and followers were scattered, seemingly destroying the church.

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<sup>96</sup> Gal.1:13. Both terms imperf., stressing a continual action. “exceedingly persecuted...destroyed...” His attempts knew no limits.

<sup>97</sup> Acts 22:4. He was filled with murderous intentions and motivations, and sought to fulfill his purpose. In his thinking, only their death would end the situation.

<sup>98</sup> Acts 26:11, “being exceedingly mad [περισσῶς τε ἐμμαινόμενος]<sup>98</sup> against them.” He describes himself as being insane with rage.

<sup>99</sup> Acts 26:9–11. Saul, true to his religious conscience, thought he was doing God’s work in imprisoning and putting believers to death, having them scourged in the synagogues, forcing them to blaspheme the name of Christ and thus deny their faith, and was exceedingly enraged against them. His fury knew no bounds.

<sup>100</sup> 1 Tim. 1:13. ὕβριστήν, violent, insolent. This demonstrates the awful power of unbelief, especially when engaged in a religious cause.

Wherever they fled, however, they preached the gospel (Acts 8:4). Thus, the providential result of the persecution was the spread of Christianity. In a short time, revival came to Samaria (Acts 8:5–25) and down into Ethiopia (Acts 8:26–40). This was the first instance of the truth of the later words of Tertullian, an early Church Father (160–220), writing about Roman State persecution: “The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.”<sup>101</sup>

Saul evidently sought to stamp out believers throughout Judea and into Galilee, Perea and beyond, as the reference is to “strange cities” (Acts 26:11). Word reached Saul and the Sanhedrin that many had fled to Damascus, which had a large Jewish community and several synagogues. Saul was compelled by his conscience, zeal and hatred to go. These followers of Jesus must be exterminated.

The “Great Synagogue,” High Priest and Sanhedrin in Jerusalem had religious authority over the Jews and synagogues throughout the Diaspora. He obtained documents from the High Priest authorizing him to seek out, arrest and bring any believers to Jerusalem for trial (Acts 9:1–2). As Jewish Christians, they still met in the synagogues and could be easily identified.

### The Conversion and Call of Saul on the Road to Damascus (36)<sup>102</sup>

[Harmony: Acts 9:1–16, 20–25; 22:6–16; 26:13–18; 1 Cor. 15:8–10;  
2 Cor. 11:32–33; Gal. 1:22–24]

After the crucifixion and resurrection of our Lord, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus is the most significant event in the history of Christianity and Western Civilization, if not the history of the world. Every aspect of Christianity doctrinally, evangelistically, practically, in relation to ecclesiastical and secular human government and the principles of missionary

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<sup>101</sup> Tertullian, *Apology*, Chap. L. *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, III, p. 55. Often and traditionally misquoted as, “The blood of Christians is the seed of the church.”

<sup>102</sup> The date of Paul’s conversion varies from 33 to 37 AD, according to the given chronologist.

endeavor bears his stamp. Even the governmental forms of democracy have a background influenced by Paul's Epistles. Who knows what God might do through the conversion of one person?

Saul, in his religious zeal and madness never thoroughly considered the genius of Christianity. "It thrives on persecution. Prosperity has often been fatal to it, persecution, never."<sup>103</sup> The persecution he headed and pursued only spread the believers and message of the gospel. The "Great Commission" (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:46–47; Acts 1:8) was being unwittingly fulfilled through persecution.

Equipped with a large entourage and letters of authority, Saul set out for Damascus. The distance was some 150 miles, a journey of about six days on one of the two main trade routes to the north.<sup>104</sup> The progress would usually be slow, as a caravan would rest during the heat of the day at a convenient place. Whether Saul walked or rode some conveyance is not known. But as he drew near to Damascus, he was pressing onward at noontime (Acts 22:6; 26:13).

This trip northward through the desert gave him time to think, contemplate and consider. What was the state of his mind and what was probing his conscience? Were there doubts about his zealous, bloody persecution? What of the teachings of Gamaliel and his tolerance? Did his memory dwell on losing his best arguments to Stephen, seeing his face like that of an angel? Did he contemplate the vision and dying prayer of Stephen for the forgiveness of his enemies?

What about those believers he had arrested, beaten, imprisoned and watched in death or caused to blaspheme? What of those little children he had orphaned? What had Stephen and these common, humble disciples that he had not? He had

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<sup>103</sup> James Stalker, *Op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>104</sup> One route went up along the coast and turned east to Damascus above the Sea of Tiberias. The other continued along the ancient King's Highway up the eastern side of Jordan. Both routes met south of Damascus.

doubtless seen many die strong in their faith, as did Stephen, and the shame of those he forced to blaspheme. Perhaps all these things began to haunt his conscience.

The Spirit of God was also now at work, bringing the Law of God to his conscious thought. He, who had considered himself as having finally achieved blamelessness before God in his own legal righteousness (Phil. 3:6)<sup>105</sup> became convicted of sin (Rom. 7:7–13). What a devastating revelation! He was left as good as dead, condemned by the very Law by which he thought he had earned eternal life! Such thoughts goaded him as made his way toward Damascus.

Suddenly at midday, as Saul was pushing onward to finish his journey, a brilliant light, brighter than the sun, flashed down upon him and his caravan. They were all thrown to the ground. Everyone heard a loud noise, perhaps as of thunder (Jn. 12:28–30). Saul alone heard the voice from heaven (9:3ff).<sup>106</sup> “Saul, Saul, why Me are you persecuting” [Σαοὺλ Σαοὺλ, τί με διώκεις;]?! In astonishment he asked, “Who art Thou, Lord?” He acknowledged that he was hearing and addressing the God of heaven—Yahweh!<sup>107</sup> The answer, emphatic and revelatory of Deity, was life-transforming: “I Am Jesus Whom thou persecutest! It is hard for you against the goads to kick!”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> Phil. 3:6, the Eng. does not translate the aor. ptc. γεινόμενος, “having become” blameless.

<sup>106</sup> Note the possible grammatical distinction. ἀκούω with an acc. dir. obj. denotes a distinct voice [ἤκουσεν φωνήν]. With a gen. dir. obj., ἀκούω denotes only a sound [ἀκούοντες μὲν τῆς φωνῆς]. Saul heard a distinct voice; the others heard only an indistinct sound.

<sup>107</sup> τίς εἶ, κύριε; The Title Κύριος in Greek, in this context, is the equivalent of *Yahweh* in Aramaic.

<sup>108</sup> Ἐγώ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις. Mark the emphatic “I Am Jesus...”! an unmistakable confirmation of the Deity of Jesus of Nazareth as very God in the flesh. See Ex. 3:13–14; Isa. 42:8; 43:25 and the various “I Am” declarations of Jesus in John’s Gospel (e.g., 8:24, 28, 58). See the author’s commentary in *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 398–402.



Trembling greatly and utterly astonished, Saul faced the awful realization that he had been fighting against the glorified Son of God! His doubts and fears had all come to fruition. His life was transformed. He was conquered, vanquished, surrendered. His first words were an acknowledgment of Jesus' Deity and Lordship: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" He was a changed man, now a believer, but still the activist, the crusader, one who must, without reservation, serve the One he formerly persecuted. Farrar describes this amazing transformation:

Saul rose another man: he had fallen in death, he rose in life; he had fallen in the midst of things temporal, he rose in awful consciousness of the things eternal: he had fallen a proud, intolerant, persecuting Jew; he rose a humble, broken-hearted, penitent Christian. In that moment a new element had been added to his being. Henceforth...he was 'in Christ.' God had found him; Jesus had spoken to him, and in one flash changed him from a raging Pharisee into a true disciple—from the murderer of the saints into the Apostle to the Gentiles. It was a new birth, a new creation.<sup>109</sup>

The Lord told him to go on to Damascus and await further orders. So he entered Damascus, the "Eye of the Desert" and "Pearl of the East"—the oldest continuous city in the world; beautiful with its river, gardens and greenery, but he saw it not. He entered, not as the Great Inquisitor at the head of an armed caravan, but led as a blind man, humbled, dependent, amazed and wholly transformed.

Note: Conversion is sudden. It is the necessary, immediate manifestation of regenerating grace—being "born again" [ἀναγεννάω] or "born from above" [γεννάω ἀνωθεν]. One consciously passes from death to spiritual life. Conviction of sin may be prolonged, but conversion is instantaneous. The terms are: στρέφω, "to turn," and ἐπιστρέφω, "to turn to, turn back."

The subjective experience may differ from person to person, but the objective reality remains the same. The Samaritan woman believed in our Lord and left her waterpot. She had a new direction in life and a greater priority (Jn. 4:25ff). Zacchaeus was

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<sup>109</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit.*, I, p. 199.

instantly transformed (Lk. 19:1–10), as was the demoniac (Mk. 5:1–20).

The thousands of Jews on the Day of Pentecost were sorely convicted, repented and attested to their conversion by baptism and faithful adherence to the truth (Acts 2:36–42). The Apostle Peter told his hearers they needed to repent and be converted (Acts 3:19). Sergius Paulus, the Roman Procurator of Cypress witnessed the power of God and believed (Acts 13:7–12). The Lord opened Lydia's heart so that she gave heed to Paul's preaching (Acts 16:14–15). The Philippian Jailer was converted in a time of life-threatening crisis. He believed, as did his household (Acts 16:26–33).

Conversion includes both repentance, or turning from sin, and turning to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith. It is, therefore, by the grace of God, life-transforming (Eph. 2:8–10).<sup>110</sup> It is coming to Christ personally, savingly, completely and without reservation. The very terminology and grammar of the New Testament points to an unreserved commitment to Jesus as Lord and Savior. It is the end of the old life and beginning of the new. God has ordained that one's conversion experience, if valid, is necessarily life-transforming. Paul's conversion is a most graphic and glorious example.

Note: Πίστευειν εἰς, “to believe into” (e.g., Jn. 3:15–16) denotes an utter, unreserved commitment. This was used in paganism before the N.T. of one who sold himself into the service [slavery] of a temple god. The Apostolic preaching was not misunderstood—saving faith was a complete, unreserved commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>111</sup>

Paul himself wrote that his conversion was a pattern:

Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief....Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting (1 Tim. 1:13, 16).

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<sup>110</sup> Eph. 2:8, Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως· καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον, Note the periphrast. perf. ptc. σεσωσμένοι. One is saved by grace and kept by grace through faith, which is itself emphatically the gift of God.

<sup>111</sup> See H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, p. 105.

The essence of Paul's conversion, apart from the supernatural circumstances and Apostolic call, is the pattern of all true conversion: God shows mercy on the ignorant and unbelieving, changes the life completely and gives new priorities and direction to the individual.

Paul's experience was not merely subjective or mental, i.e., it was not merely an ecstasy or mental vision.<sup>112</sup> He actually saw the risen, ascended glorified Christ, the Son of God in His heavenly glory. This became the necessary seal of his apostleship (Acts 1:22; Cor. 9:1; 15:4–8).

For three days and nights, he was left in total blindness. This was the time to come to terms with his life, purpose, relation to the Lord, the Scriptures and to other believers. He spent this time in prayer and contemplation. "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11)—the initial, primary mark of saving grace. He had become a praying person. He was no longer simply reciting his set prayers as a Jew and Rabbi, but praying from the heart and with his whole being—a believer.

The Lord appeared to Ananias to prepare him to see Saul, to heal and baptize him. Evidently Saul's reputation had preceded him and all Damascus was in fear. The Lord allayed these fears, then revealed to Ananias that Saul was "a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake" (Acts 9:10–16).

How God answered the fearful prayers of those believers in Damascus who greatly dreaded his arrival! Surely this was "exceeding abundantly above all" they had asked or thought (Eph. 3:20)!

What a strange meeting between Saul and Ananias, the first believer who encountered him since his sudden conversion, "Brother Saul!" What a blessed confirmation of his experience and initial acceptance among the people of God. His sight was restored and he was obediently and joyfully baptized. Even the

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<sup>112</sup> In Acts 26:19, Paul uses the term ὀπτασία, exhibiting one's self to view, not ὄραμα, an ecstasy or mental vision, i.e., he actually saw the Glorified Christ and did not merely have an ecstatic mental vision.

meeting with Ananias was preceded by a vision to Paul, anticipating and confirming the restoration of his eyesight and preparing him to receive further Divine communications through such spiritual medium.

It is very unusual for one's conversion and call to the gospel ministry occur at the same time, but it was so with Paul and has been true in the experience of others, especially in the lives of some who before had been mere professing Christians and engaged in great spiritual struggles. Everything in Paul's life would change except one—his utter devotedness to his cause—the single-mindedness, zeal and tenacity our Lord would sanctify and re-direct it to His own glory. He would preach the very faith he once sought to destroy!

Saul the great persecutor and inquisitor would become Paul the beloved Apostle—and would suffer in his ministry the very same tortures he had brought upon those early believers—derision, floggings, beatings, stoning, imprisonments and finally, martyrdom (2 Cor. 11:17–33; 2 Tim. 4:6–7). Through these all he would be enabled by the grace of God to humbly glorify the Lord Jesus and crown the gospel with his life, labors, sufferings and martyrdom.

### From Arabia to Antioch (36–38)

[Harmony: Acts 9:19–31; Gal. 1:16–24; Acts 9:20–30; 11:22–30; 22:17–21; 2 Cor. 4:5–18; 11:22–33; 12:1–9]

The Divine calendar of events is unknown to us, apart from biblical prophecy. God's timing and ours may not coincide. We must walk by faith. God's delays are not necessarily denials. Every event in our circumstances has been ordered by Divine Providence—that process by which God brings to pass His eternal decree.

Our personal lives, plans and purposes—however spiritual or God-honoring—are but a very small part of the overall, inclusive Divine purpose. So it was with Paul. His calling as the great missionary and Apostle to the Gentiles would be fulfilled in the Divine order and time. God is never in a hurry. Some circumstances and events had to occur first.

Paul needed time to contemplate and mature in his faith and understanding in the transition from his previous, narrow Judaism to a full and inclusive Christianity. The Scriptures must be opened to him anew and under Divine revelation, conclusions drawn and his mind matured.

The gospel realities and message must be worked out thoroughly, doctrinally and practically. Its various doctrinal truths pertaining to the Lord Jesus Christ, salvation, Jews and Gentiles being now fellow-heirs of the grace of life, a consistent evangelism, the varied issues of Christian experience, the nature of and relations within the church and eschatological distinctives must all be considered and brought into a harmonious whole.

Further, Christianity still existed in a Jewish context. The true meaning and scope of the “Great Commission” had not yet been broached. The door of the Gentiles had not yet been opened. The great issue of the inclusion of Gentile Christians was yet to be finalized. The debate concerning circumcising Gentile believers was yet future.

Finally, Paul must be brought to maturity as an evangelist and tempered through trials and suffering, his methodology widened by debates and discussions with the Greek philosophers and pagan rhetoricians of his day, his arguments whetted by experience and the leading of the Spirit of God. As the Apostle to Gentiles he must be a man and a Christian for the world.

The first of these preparatory necessities took him to the solitary haunts of Arabia (Gal. 1:11–19), the second would be fulfilled later by Peter, receiving a transforming, mind and heart-changing vision, then preaching at the house of Cornelius and finally defending his Gentile outreach to the Jewish church at Jerusalem (Acts 10:1–11:18).

The issue of receiving uncircumcised Gentiles into the Christian fold would not be finally answered until the church conference after Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 15). The third and final issue would be worked out back in Tarsus in the several years he lived and labored there in relative obscurity (Acts 9:29–31; Gal. 1:21).

### The Three years in Arabia (36–38)

[Acts 9:19; Gal. 1:16–18]

Although the desert country east of Damascus was Nabataean [Syrian] Arabia, it seems more appropriate and fitting to find Paul in the far south, in Perea Arabia and the Sinai Peninsula.

Here Moses met with God on the Mount of Fire, Elijah dwelt in solitary exile and humiliation and found personal revival. Such solitary times seem necessary for the heart, soul and mind to be prepared for some further, great, demanding ministry. John the Baptist spent years in desert solitude before his short and powerful ministry.

Even our Lord spent forty days and nights in desert solitude between His baptism and entrance into His public ministry, tempted of the devil and tried to the extreme (Matt. 3:13–4:11; Lk. 4:1–14; Mk. 1:9–13). Paul's Arabian sojourn was necessary to thoroughly come to terms with his conversion experience, his call and the ramifications of the gospel he was destined to preach.

His transition from a narrow-minded, self-righteous zealot to a loving, understanding, humble Christian and Apostle would take time. To work out the inclusive comprehension of the gospel would necessitate days and nights—and months—steeped in prayer and the Scriptures, seeking their full meaning in light of spiritual illumination and Divine inspiration.

Paul was emphatic that his gospel was not new, but the unfolding of the Scriptural promises (Rom. 1:1ff), received solely through Divine revelation, and that he had gained nothing from the other Apostles (Gal. 1:1, 6–20; 2:1–10). There had to be a complete break with Jewish prejudice and preeminence. Paul was being prepared for the world.

The result was an inspired grasp of the interconnectedness of the Old Testament Scriptures with the gospel economy and its doctrinal and experiential fullness. The foundation was laid and progress made for a consistent, inspired grasp of the power of the gospel of free and sovereign grace; the condemnation of all men, Jews and Gentiles alike and their salvation, with “the middle wall

of partition” broken down; The reality that Jewish and Gentile believers would now comprise a new entity—“Spiritual Israel.”

He must work out the utter futility of a legal righteousness; the truth and reality of justification by faith; the correspondence between Adam the first and Christ as Adam the last, the “Second Man,” as the respective heads of the human and redeemed races and the implications of the imputation of sin in the one and the imputation of a perfect righteousness in the other.

Further, the mystery and reality of the believer’s union with Christ and its implications had to be by Divine revelation. The superiority of Christ over the prophets, Moses and the Levitical priesthood; the truth of the adoption of all believers and the reception of the Holy Spirit; the necessity and reality of sanctification in its positional, definitive, practical and progressive aspects had to be considered.

The believer’s absolute guarantee of future glory; the present work of the Holy Spirit in Christian experience, and the practicalities of the Christian’s hope and life in its various spheres were issues to be received by Divine revelation.

Paul could and did quote from the Old Testament and make gospel doctrinal and practical application with inspired and astute pointedness. These truths would later be set forth in his letters: Galatians would deal with the Law in its most inclusive sense as opposed to the Gospel of free grace. The Thessalonians Epistles would deal with present trials and sufferings and future issues. In the Epistles to the Corinthians, he would deal with the more practical issues of the gospel and the life of the local assembly, including the gifts of the Spirit.

Romans would be Paul’s *magnum opus*, and become “A Philosophy of the Christian Religion” in all its doctrinal, historical and practical ramifications. In Colossians and Ephesians he would delve deeply into the mysteries of the gospel and plum the depths of the eternal redemptive purpose of the glorious grace of the Triune God as it centers in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the latter he would also graphically reveal the realities of spiritual warfare. In Philippians

he would bear his heart to a loving, concerned church and engage in practical matters.

In the Pastoral Epistles, he would seek to strengthen and encourage Timothy and Titus with doctrinal truth and practical admonitions. In Hebrews Paul, harnessing all his rabbinical training and approach, would demonstrate the superiority of our Lord over the prophets, over Moses and over the Levitical priesthood, urging his readers on to spiritual separation and holiness.

Traveling back northward to Damascus, he would be a more mature, capable and useful evangelist and minister of God's Word. But it would be several years before he would fully enter into his life's work as the Apostle to the Gentiles. He would need to be tested by trial and opposition, his mind whetted by confrontation and his personality tempered and matured through suffering. 2 Cor. 11:23–33 describes many of Paul's sufferings and trials during his early years, from the three years in Arabia to Barnabas' seeking him out and bringing him to Antioch (Gal. 1:16–18; Acts 9:19–31; 11:19–26).

#### The Return to and Escape from Damascus (38)

[Acts 9:20–25; 2 Cor. 11:24, 32–33]

Immediately upon his return from Arabia, Paul began to preach Christ in the synagogues of Damascus "that He is the Son of God." As there was a large Jewish community there, he must have preached in many synagogues.<sup>113</sup> His ministry did not last long. The Jews, amazed that the one who had been intent on arresting believers was now preaching as one of them, plotted to assassinate him, then the Ethnarch<sup>114</sup> had a guard watch the city day and night to apprehend him. He escaped by being let down in a basket by night over the city wall by fellow-believers (2 Cor. 11:32–33).

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<sup>113</sup> In the Jewish War, which began in 66 AD, up to 18,000 Jews were slain in Damascus, revealing a very large community and thus many synagogues.

<sup>114</sup> 2 Cor. 11:32, The Ethnarch [ἐθνάρχης] was the lieutenant or "governor" under King Aretas.



There are several issues worthy of consideration: first, his first evangelistic efforts revealed the influence of the martyr Stephen. Paul's arguments and use of Scripture, revealing the Lord Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, would essentially be the same, as revealed in his later recorded sermons.

Second, the methodology of Paul was being formed for his entire ministry.<sup>115</sup> As the gospel was "to the Jew first, then to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16), he would preach in the synagogue, gather the converts—some from among the Jews and mostly from proselytes—and form them into a Christian assembly (Acts 13:14ff; 14:1ff; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4f, 19; 19:8).

The matter of circumcision was one of the major issues in early Jewish and Gentile Christianity, and must have been a major issue with these "proselytes of the gate." The disapprobation and scorn of circumcision doubtless caused many to remain such and not submit to the rite of circumcision:

Note: The Greek theaters, public baths and gymnasiums, the former with their plays and the latter with their emphasis upon physical nudity and worship of the nude human body, were considered contrary to the Divine Commandments in the Law of Moses and therefore blasphemous to the Jews.

Athletic contests and even business meetings were often held in public baths and gymnasiums in the nude. The historian Josephus [Bk. XII, Chap. V, 1; Whiston's Ed., p. 256] states that some Jews had their penises surgically altered [*epispasm*] to hide their circumcision from the derision of the Greeks. The Apostle Paul refers to *epispasm* [μὴ ἐπισπάσθω· ἐν ἀκροβυστίᾳ] in 1 Cor. 7:18–19.

This practice reached its apex in the New Testament Era. The prejudice against and ridicule of circumcision may be the reason for many Gentile proselytes to Judaism to become mere "proselytes of the gate," i.e., "God-fearers," rather than fully embrace Judaism as "proselytes of righteousness" and submit to circumcision. From this group, Paul gained most of his converts in his synagogue ministry. Thus, both circumcision and *epispasm*

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<sup>115</sup> See Acts 13:14–41 and 17:1–3 for examples of Paul's customary [κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἰωθός] evangelistic approach in the synagogues.

had a significant effect upon Paul's ministry among Jewish proselytes.

The non-requirement of circumcision for Christian converts was one of the first distinctions between Jewish proselytes, the Judaizers and Christian converts (Acts 15:1ff; Gal. 5:2-3; 6:12-13).<sup>116</sup>

Third, as the Jews plotted to murder him, they would have first attempted to silence him and bring him back from his "apostasy" through lesser means. Probably at Damascus he first suffered the five beatings at the hands of the synagogue leaders (2 Cor. 11:24).

#### Paul's first Trip to Jerusalem since His Conversion (38)

[Acts 9:26-30; 22:17-21; Gal. 1:17-24]

From Damascus Paul journeyed to Jerusalem, entering it the first time as a believer. His reputation prevented his reception by the Jerusalem believers. They probably believed that this was a ploy to betray them to the religious authorities.

Barnabas intervened and informed them of Paul's conversion, subsequent transformation and preaching at Damascus. Only then did they receive him, and he was accepted as a fellow-believer in their fellowship. One wonders if he visited the place of Stephen's stoning and reminisced about what had transpired by God's grace.

He immediately began to boldly preach in the synagogues and dispute with the Hellenists. Again, before plotting to murder him, they most probably first subjected him to one or more floggings (2 Cor. 11:23ff). Once the plot to assassinate Paul became known, the brethren took him down to Caesarea, the seaport, and sent him to Tarsus by ship. It may have been during that sea voyage that he suffered the first of the shipwrecks he speaks of in 2 Cor. 11:26.

Two important considerations: first, this is the establishment of the close friendship with Barnabas which would later cause

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<sup>116</sup> See Mark Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, p. 31 and Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, p. 381. Repeated from Vol. III, pp. 89-90 of the *Survey of the Bible*.

him to travel to Tarsus to seek out Paul (Acts 11:19–26) and eventually lead to their first missionary journey. Second, while at Jerusalem, the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision in the temple and directly commissioned him as the Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17–22).

From Paul's words, it seems evident that he thought, from his rabbinical background and past behavior, that he was more suited to Jewish evangelism; but the Lord's reiteration of the words He had spoken to Ananias confirmed the nature and future of Paul's ministry:

Acts 9:15–16; 22:21. But the Lord said unto...[Ananias], Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.... And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.

#### The Interlude: Paul's Missionary Work in Cilicia (38–46)

[Harmony: Gal. 1:17–24; Acts 9:20–25, 30; 11:22–30; 22:17–21;  
2 Cor. 4:5–18; 11:22–28; 12:1–9; Phil. 1:20–25]

Now followed several “silent years” which Paul spent in relative obscurity.<sup>117</sup> We do know that some of Paul's family had been and were converted, some before him and perhaps some through his own evangelism. During this time he suffered opposition and persecution from the Jews (2 Cor. 4:5ff; 11:22–30).

It was also in this time-frame that he was taken up into the third heaven to view unspeakable spiritual and glorious realities (2 Cor. 12:1–10). The effect of this transcendent rapture enabled him to endure the worst which the world could and would heap upon him. This gave a perspective to his life and ministry which caused him to devalue earthly things and filled his mind and heart with heavenly anticipation (Rom. 8:16–23; 2 Cor. 4:16–18; Phil. 1:21–23).

We read of churches existing very early in the area of Cilicia, but not of their founding, which leads us to believe that

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<sup>117</sup> This time varied from eight to ten years (c. 37–47) according to various chronologists.

Paul exercised an evangelistic ministry during those “silent years” (Acts 15:23, 41).

Events in the Roman world and in Judea during this time would affect the future of Christianity and Paul’s ministry. Peter would open the door for the Gentiles at the home of Cornelius, removing one of the greatest obstacles facing Jewish and Gentile Christianity (Acts 10:1–11:18).

This would also give rise to the Judaizers or Judaizing party of the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:1ff)<sup>118</sup> whose antagonism and sectarianism would necessitate the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15). Their zeal and divisive influence would dog Paul’s steps throughout his ministry and call forth the Epistle to the Galatians and sections in some of his other letters. The issues would be the necessity of circumcision and a legal righteousness through the law, which would nullify the redemptive work of the cross and neutralize the grace of God (Gal. 2:14–21).<sup>119</sup>

James, the brother of John, would become the first Apostle to die a martyr’s death under the rule of Herod Agrippa I (44 AD). Until the great Neronian Roman State Persecution of 64–68, the persecutions against Christians were all Jewish, with the exception of some few pagan, superstitious uprisings (e.g., at Philippi, Acts 16:19–24 and Ephesus, Acts 19:11–41).

World and Judean political events. Two anti-Jewish Roman Emperors ruled during this time: Caligula [Gaius] (37–41), who nearly provoked a Jewish war by insisting his image be erected in Jerusalem, and Claudius (41–54), who expelled all Jews from Rome.

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<sup>118</sup> The Judaizers essentially taught that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian, and demanded the rite of circumcision for Gentiles converts.

<sup>119</sup> See Epistle to the Galatians, which is a diatribe against the legal righteousness of law in its widest sense, including circumcision. Also see such passages as Acts 13:39; Rom. 2:11–29; 3:19–20, 27–31; 4:9–16; 5:20–21; 7:1–14; 8:1–4; 13:8–10; Phil. 3:9; 1 Tim. 1:711; Titus 3:9, etc.

After the recall of Pontius Pilate (36), there was a succession of Roman Procurators in Judea: Marcellus (36–38), Herod Agrippa I, who ruled with Jewish favor (41–44), Cuspius Fadus (44–46), Tiberius Julius Alexander (46–48), Ventidius Cumanus (48–52), Marcus Antonius Felix (51–59) and Porcius Festus (59–62).

Finally, there was a succession of Jewish High Priests: Joseph Caiaphas (18–37), Jonathan ben Ananus (36–37), Theophilus ben Ananus (37–41), Simon Cantatheras ben Boethus (41–43), Matthias ben Ananus (43), Elioneus ben Simon Cantatheras (43–44), Jonathan ben Ananus (44, restored to High Priesthood), Josephus ben Camydus (44–46) and Ananias ben Nebedeus (46–58). This meant that Paul would have been relatively unknown by face to those who succeeded Joseph Caiaphas, who probably had given him his original commission (e.g., Acts 23:1–5), and he would have been unknown by face to them.

### The Church at Antioch:

#### Its History and Ministry (c. 34–)

[Harmony: Acts 8:1–4; 11:19–30; 15:1–30; Gal. 2:1–21]

The Church at Antioch was not planted by Apostolic labors, but by Jewish Hellenistic believers who preached the gospel in the synagogues and then to the pagan Greeks, i.e., openly to the Gentiles. This was one of two great revivals or spiritual awakenings which resulted from the persecution after the martyrdom of Stephen. The other revival was in Samaria under Philip, who had been a deacon in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 6:1–6).

As with the work in Samaria, word came to the leadership of the Jerusalem Church, and Barnabas was sent to report on the work and help oversee it. Barnabas was a Cypriot of the Diaspora and fitted to the work of a predominantly Gentile church. The Antiochian church was the first church to be composed of Jews, former Proselytes and Gentiles—the first assembly which truly mirrored the dictates of the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Acts 1:8).

It was free from the nagging Jewish narrowness of the Jerusalem Church and from any controversy concerning the circumcision of Gentile believers or fellowshiping with uncircumcised socially (Gal. 2:1ff). It seems almost certain that this church was comprised largely of Gentiles.

Note: Jewish proselytes were numerous throughout the Diaspora. Most were proselytes of the gate, i.e., Gentiles who remained uncircumcised, yet were Jewish monotheists. Fewer were proselytes of righteousness, i.e., those who became Jews and submitted to circumcision.

After Barnabas and Paul labored together here and then proceeded on their first missionary journey under the leadership of the Holy Spirit and the ordination of the church (Acts 13:1ff), the transition from Jewish to predominantly Gentile Christianity occurred. The church at Antioch then became the center of Christianity for the evangelization of the world.

The Jerusalem Church never escaped its Jewishness, perhaps confusing religion with culture and racial narrowness with orthodoxy (Acts 15:1ff; 21:17–28; Gal. 2:1–21). Paul was free from such, and accommodated himself to his Jewish culture and brethren when necessary, without compromising the gospel; he became all things to all men (Acts 18:18–21; 21:23–26; 1 Cor. 9:19–23).

#### The History and Description of the Syrian Antioch:

##### The Name “Christian”

[Acts 11:27]

There were at least two cities by the name of “Antioch” in the New Testament: The Phrygian Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14–50), a Roman *Colonia*,<sup>120</sup> and Antioch, the capital of Syria, a free city. These were founded by the Greek Selucid rulers of the Antiochian dynasty before the Roman Era. Syrian Antioch was founded by Seleucus Nicator in 300 BC and named after his father, Antiochus. It was the provincial capital of Eastern Cilicia and Syria.

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<sup>120</sup> A Roman *Colonia*, or “Colony” was a city given the highest status, had self-government and was comprised of a great percentage of Roman citizens.

Antioch of Syria, “The Gate of the East,” “The Heathen Queen and Metropolis of the East,” was “an Oriental Rome,” a city of half a million people of various nationalities and cultures, a melting pot of East and West. It was the third city of the empire, after Rome and Alexandria. This was the location of the imperial mint. The city itself was laid out in precision and architecturally beautiful, filled with fine buildings and beautiful gardens. It was surrounded by a great wall.

The city was a pagan city, with all of the depraved pleasures, entertainment and religious characteristics of a Corinth. It was home to every imaginable vice and excess. Oriental mysticism and religions prevailed. Cultic prostitutes served the great Temple of Daphne, and behind the city, rising into the heights, was Mount Silpius, whose peak had been carved into the likeness of the god of the underworld.

Rome was located on the Tiber River in Italy; Antioch on the Orontes River in Syria. Such was the open lewdness and influence of Antioch on Rome that it was said “The sewage of the Orontes has flowed into and polluted the Tiber.”

Antioch’s harbor, a great commercial port with access to and trade with the entire Mediterranean world, was located at Selucia at the mouth of the Orontes sixteen miles from Antioch. The river was navigable for commercial shipping up to the city. The city had a very large Jewish population as a commercial city, and thus had many synagogues. But the pagan culture did not allow the Jews much open antagonism and persecution against Christians, as the population was mostly pagan and not Jewish as in Jerusalem. Here, Christianity flourished.

“...The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:27). The early believers called themselves by various designations: “Disciples,” “Believers,” “Faithful,” “Saints” and “Brethren.” This name would not have been given by the Jews, for it was the Greek equivalent [Χριστός] to the Messiah [מָשִׁיחַ], which would have been blasphemous. It was evidently given to these early believers by the pagan Greeks and Romans. The term

itself is a hybrid,<sup>121</sup> and the comments of Farrar are interesting, if not perceptive:

It is always interesting to notice the rise of a new and memorable word, but not a few of those which have met with universal acceptance have started into accidental life. It is not so with the word "Christian." It indicates a decisive epoch, and was rather the coinage of a society than of any single man. More, perhaps than any word ever invented, it marks...the watershed of all human history.

...this Greek rendering of a Hebrew idea was stamped with a Roman form by receiving a Latin termination, as though to foreshadow that this new name should be coextensive with the vast dominion which swayed the present destinies of the world. And if the word was thus pregnant with all the deepest and mightiest associations of the past and of the present, how divine was to be its future history! Henceforth it was needed to describe the peculiarity, to indicate the essence, for all that was morally the greatest and ideally the most lovely in the condition of mankind.<sup>122</sup>

Barnabas brings Paul to the Syrian Antioch (c. 46)

[Acts 11:22–26]

The revival continued under Barnabas, and he was moved to travel to Tarsus to seek out Paul, who was somewhere in Cilicia. Acts 11:25, ἐξῆλθεν...ἀναζητῆσαι "seek out...search for." It has been inferred by some from the intensive form, that Barnabas had some difficulty finding Paul, who may not have been in Tarsus at that time, but evangelizing in the area. Barnabas knew Paul, his freedom from Judaism and Jewish religious and cultural narrowness, and evidently of his call to the Gentiles. Upon finding him, they both returned to Antioch and the work increased. An enjoyable and profitable year was spent in this ministry.

The stage was now set for the great missionary journeys and the spread of the Gospel throughout Asia Minor, then Greece and

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<sup>121</sup> The Greek expression of the Hebrew idea is *χριστός*. The Latin terminus is *-anus*. Thus, we have the primitive form, *Christianus*, a "Christian," a "little Christ," "Christ-like," or "follower of Christ."

<sup>122</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 296–297.



the world. The providential chain of events becomes evident as each step in the great gospel plan unfolded.

Paul's Second Trip to Jerusalem:  
Relief Ministry to the Jerusalem Church (c. 47)  
[Acts 11:27–30; Gal. 2:1–10]

Agabus<sup>123</sup> and other prophets came to Antioch from Jerusalem, prophesying of the famine which would come upon the empire. Relief was collected, either in money or the goods themselves, for the poor brethren in Judea. This relief mission was taken by Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem. The Jerusalem Church, situated in the very heart of a strong Jewish prejudice, evidently continually suffered from privation, with no help from the surrounding Jewish community.

Paul's later ministry was greatly concerned with relieving the poor saints at Jerusalem, seeking to both provide and to heal any breach because of racial and cultural prejudice (Rom. 15:25–28, 31; 1 Cor. 16:1–4). The meeting with the leadership of the Jerusalem Church is described in Gal. 2:1–10. Titus, who was an uncircumcised Greek, is first mentioned. Further, it was evident that the leadership recognized that Paul was called to be the Apostle to the Gentiles and have a Gentile ministry, while the others were given a Jewish ministry.

Paul is Forced to Rebuke Peter:  
The Issue: Jewish Narrowness and Church Fellowship  
[Gal. 2:11–21]

There is some controversy over the time of this meeting in Antioch and the confrontation between Paul and Peter. Most would assign this to a time after the Church Conference in Acts 15, which would be very denigrating to Peter, if not astounding and seemingly anachronistic. Would not Paul have referred to or argued from the issues at that conference—and from Peter's own previous testimony?

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<sup>123</sup> Agabus is mentioned only twice in the New Testament (Acts 11:28; 21:10f), but the two incidents are many years apart. He was a prophet of longstanding credibility at Jerusalem.

Barnabas, who was a very broad-minded brother, was also negatively influenced, which, again, would have been inexplicable after the Jerusalem Conference and after the first missionary journey to the Gentiles. If the Southern Galatian hypothesis is valid, then this meeting had to take place prior to the Jerusalem Conference (c. 50–51) and before Paul wrote the Epistle to the Galatians (c. 49–50).

After the death of James, the imprisonment of Peter and his release, and the judicial death of Herod Agrippa I in 44 AD, Peter left Jerusalem. He eventually went to Babylon to minister, and had John Mark with him (1 Pet. 5:13).<sup>124</sup> Thus, Peter could have easily been in this area before he journeyed to Babylon. Antioch was becoming the center of Christian work and was well outside any governmental jurisdiction which would or could affect Peter.

Note: There are several views pertaining to the Jerusalem Conference, the Epistle to the Galatians and this confrontation: first, that this confrontation occurred after the Jerusalem Conference, which would mean that Paul wrote Galatians after the events of Acts 15—either the Northern Galatian hypothesis, that Galatians was written c. 57, or that it was written just after the conference c. 50.

Why, then, did he not plead the evident and copious fruit of their first missionary journey to Barnabas, and reiterate the truths of the Jerusalem Conference to him and to Peter? Why did not Paul remind Peter of Peter's own statement? Such a remonstrance would certainly have been effectual and silenced them.

Second, that Galatians chapter 2:1–10 refers to the Jerusalem Conference, and to private meetings held before the final public disputation.

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<sup>124</sup> The Romanists hold that when Peter left Jerusalem upon his supernatural release (Acts 12:1–17), he went to Rome and became the first Roman Bishop or pope. Paul, however does not mention Peter being in Rome when he wrote the Epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:1ff), and Peter would have been there, according to Romanists, for twenty-five years. Further, the term "Babylon" should be taken literally, as there was a huge Jewish population at Babylon.

The three largest Jewish centers were Babylon, Jerusalem and Alexandria. The idea that "Babylon" represents Rome has traditionally cast a western interpretation over much of prophetic hermeneutics. The modern rise of Islam may well necessitate a different interpretation.

Third, the view that is espoused in this section, that the confrontation occurred before the Jerusalem Conference, which would explain the boldness of the Judaizers before their public rebuke.

### The First Missionary Journey of Paul (48–49)

[Harmony: Acts 13:1–14:26; Gal.; 2 Tim. 3:10–12; 4:9–12]

#### The Second Division of the Book of Acts

The Book of Acts can be divided into two parts according to the ministries and prominence of these two Apostles: Peter (Chapters 1–12) and Paul (Chapters 13–28). Baxter<sup>125</sup> has an interesting parallel of the two Apostles:

| Peter                                   | Paul                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| First recorded Sermon (2:14–40)         | First recorded Sermon (13:15–41)               |
| Lame Man Healed (3:1–8)                 | Lame Man Healed (14:8–10)                      |
| Simon the Sorcerer (8:10–13, 18–24)     | Elymas the Sorcerer (13:6–11)                  |
| Healing influence of a shadow (5:12–16) | Healing influence of a handkerchief (19:11–12) |
| Laying on of Hands (8:14–17)            | Laying on of Hands (19:1–7)                    |
| Peter Worshipped (10:24–26)             | Paul Worshipped (14:11–18)                     |
| Tabitha Raised from the Dead (12:36–42) | Eutychus Raised from the Dead (20:7–12)        |
| Peter Imprisoned (12:3–10)              | Paul Imprisoned (24:27ff; 28:30–31)            |

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<sup>125</sup> J. Sidlow Baxter, *Explore the Book*, VI, p. 12.

Chapter 13 begins the distinct ministry of the Apostle Paul, the center of Christianity moves from Jerusalem to Antioch, from predominantly Jewish to Gentile Christianity, and the main personality moves from Peter to Paul.<sup>126</sup>

The World Paul and Barnabas faced was influenced by three pervasive forces: first, the government, the military and the officials were Roman. Paul was a Roman citizen, traveled on Roman roads<sup>127</sup> and had some degree of protection, should he ask for it.<sup>128</sup>

Second, the Greek influence was universal and inclusive, revealed in the language, culture and religion. It is said that the Romans conquered the Greeks militarily, but the Greeks conquered the Romans culturally. Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Empire.

Third, the Jewish influence. This centered in the synagogues of the Diaspora. These became the providential places to begin the gospel ministry in any given commercial city. The Jews of the Diaspora were basically merchants and craftsmen, and peopled all commercial cities. Paul's custom was to begin his ministry in the synagogues if possible, following his principle of "to the Jew first and also the Gentile"(Acts 13:14f; 14:1; 17:1, 10, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8; Rom. 1:16).

Paul was the one man ideally suited for all these pervading influences: a Roman citizen, a former Jewish Rabbi, fluent in the Greek language and well-acquainted with the Greek culture, philosophies and religion.

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<sup>126</sup> The introductory paragraph and chart have been reproduced from the author's *Survey of the Bible*, III, pp. 459–460.

<sup>127</sup> There were some 50,000 miles of main, paved roads throughout the Empire. The Romans invented the first form of cement. There were also many secondary, graveled roads.

<sup>128</sup> Paul only revealed his Roman citizenship if it did not hinder the gospel and would prevent unnecessary suffering—or give him a hearing before Caesar (Acts 16:37–38; 22:22–29; 25:11–12; 2 Cor. 11:23–25).

As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was destined for an itinerate ministry. Indeed, from his very conversion he became a traveler. His early work took him from Arabia to Damascus, from Damascus to Jerusalem, and from Jerusalem to Cilicia. His subsequent ministry would take him across the Roman world as an itinerate gospel minister or a prisoner awaiting trial. His work is traced by his missionary journeys.

The Book of Acts and Paul's Epistles both reveal his great concern and care for the welfare of the churches he had planted and organized. On his first missionary trip, he and Barnabas re-visited the churches where they ordained elders in every church. Throughout his ministry Paul considered his converts as being in the context of and in fellowship with a local, New Testament church.

Note: The idea that Christians may live apart from local church membership and fellowship is counter to the New Testament. Many in our present age suffer from being absent or separated from this God-ordained spiritual and sanctified social environment.<sup>129</sup>

### Summary of the First Missionary Journey

Scripture references: Acts 13:1–14:26; Gal.; 2 Tim. 3:10–12; 4:9–12. Time-frame: c. 47–49 AD: one and a half to two years. Approximately 1,400 miles traveled. Provinces and cities visited: in Cyprus: Salamis, Paphos; in Pamphylia: Perga; in Phrygia and Pisidia: Antioch; in Galatia: Iconium, Lystra, Derbe. Salient issues: first mission to the Gentiles. Paul stoned, left for dead at Lystra.

### Barnabas and Saul Ordained as Missionaries to the Gentiles (48)

[Acts 13:1–5]

The Divine call for a mission to the Gentiles came to and through a fasting, praying church. Mission work was commissioned by our Lord and initiated by the Spirit. The men

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<sup>129</sup> It is implied that Paul, consistent with such God-ordained principles, planted a church at Athens. The idea that he did not would be utterly inconsistent with his principles, and is based on the absence of any epistle to a church at Athens.

chosen were neither young nor novices, but mature leaders and already experienced in the ministry. It is noteworthy that Paul is mentioned last as probably the lowest and newest among the leadership.

The first truly Christian ordination was simple, yet profound, and provides in principle the New Testament pattern for ordination: first, there was a Divine call, probably through a prophet. This call was not merely subjective or a matter of self-assertion. Second, this call was given to and acknowledged by the church.<sup>130</sup> Third, the church acted upon the call of Barnabas and Paul by fasting, praying, laying their hands upon these men as a symbolic act of acknowledgement and commission, and then sent them out under the Spirit and church's authority. The sentence construction should be carefully noted. All these acts were culminative in sending them forth.<sup>131</sup>

When they returned from their mission, they reported to the church, which had sent them forth under the leadership of the Spirit (Acts 14:26–27).

Note: The evangelistic and missionary methods of the Apostle Paul. His methodology was determined directly by the leadership of the Holy Spirit and providentially by the existing circumstances. It was probably developed during the first years of his ministry from his return from Arabia, first visit to Jerusalem, the silent years in Cilicia and was settled before his first missionary journey with Barnabas.

Providentially, the Jews of the Diaspora built synagogues throughout the Greco–Roman world. These local synagogues, comprised of both Jews and proselytes, provided the initial preaching place in any given city, and there were few cities without at least one synagogue (eg., Lystra, Philippi). In the

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<sup>130</sup> The local assembly should have time to evaluate and consider the suitability of such men for a given ministry. There is no place for a self-appointed, neophyte or rogue preacher or missionary.

<sup>131</sup> Acts 13:3. Note should be taken of the const: a series of aor. ptcs. followed by the main vb. τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν. "Having fasted, having prayed, having laid hands upon them, they sent them away." The ordination and sending forth was under the leadership of the Spirit and the authority of the Antioch Church.

synagogue there already existed a preliminary background in the Scriptures—with their encompassing monotheism, doctrines of creation, the Fall, the Law, sin, prophetic hope in the coming Messiah—and ready hearers, especially among the proselytes of the gate.

Paul was usually given an opportunity to stand and address the congregation. His methodology consisted in opening the Scriptures, pointing to the Messianic prophecies of a suffering Savior, and reasoning that Jesus was the promised Messiah (Acts 17:2–3). There was often a resultant division among the unbelieving Jews, those Jews who believed and among the proselytes, this latter group being the greatest number.

Those converted through this “synagogue ministry” would be baptized and organized into churches. When faced with Gentile unbelievers without a knowledge of the one true God or the hope of salvation, his evangelism had to lay a groundwork which presupposed the realities of Scripture (Acts 17:22–34).<sup>132</sup>

John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas accompanied them as their attendant [ὑπηρέτης]. It was evidently a non-ministerial or non-preaching position. He probably carried baggage, got their meals and provisions and attended to mundane things.<sup>133</sup> Evidently he was not separated or sent forth by the Holy Spirit, although he had been connected with the Lord’s Disciples as a lad (Mk. 14:51–52)<sup>134</sup> and an observer of the work in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12, 25).

He later deserted the work to the chagrin of Paul (Acts 13:13). The reasons may have been multiple: he was experienced in Jewish Christianity; the Gentile work may have proved an obstacle. Barnabas was replaced by Paul as the prominent personality. The journey into the wild mountains of Asia Minor

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<sup>132</sup> For a discussion of Paul’s presuppositional approach see the section on Paul at Athens, pp. 151–154.

<sup>133</sup> ὑπηρέτης, lit: an under-rower, a subordinate, attendant. This is an example of so-called questionable “ministries” filled by persons unqualified to preach or teach, and often never set aside to such by the church.

<sup>134</sup> As the reference to this young man occurs only in Mark’s Gospel record, most assume it was Mark himself.

may have proved too intimidating. The newness and sense of adventure and commitment may have worn off.

It is noteworthy that Mark returned to Jerusalem, not Antioch. Paul found fault with his desertion. This would finally result in Paul and Barnabas separating (Acts 15:36–40). Much later, John Mark would prove himself and serve with both Peter in Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13) and Paul at Rome (2 Tim. 4:11).

### Excursus:

#### New Testament Missionary Principles

As the Apostle to the Gentiles, Paul was the first to truly, directly and extensively fulfill the “Great Commission” (Matt. 28:18–20; Mk. 16:15; Lk. 24:47). The other Apostles were given to a Jewish ministry.<sup>135</sup>

Beginning with the “silent years” in Cilicia and throughout his missionary labors, which encompassed most of the Roman world, Paul followed a consistent pattern: he made converts, baptized them and organized them into churches. New Testament missions were and are to remain *ecclesiocentric*—church centered. Evangelism which stops short of organizing converts into New Testament churches for their spiritual welfare, receiving instruction and becoming a corporate entity within a given society is not biblical, but defective, partial evangelism.

When the Scriptures are examined, there are several essential principles which characterize New Testament missions (Acts 13:1–5b, 13; 14:26–27; Rom. 10:13–15): first, New Testament missionary work is *ecclesiocentric*. Paul was sent out by the church at Antioch, preached and established churches, and reported to his home church. This is evangelism or missions as anticipated in the “Great Commission.” The terms “baptizing” and “teaching” (Matt. 28:18–20) presuppose the context of a local Christian assembly. The local, New Testament church is the only God–ordained institution for this Gospel economy

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<sup>135</sup> Although Peter, the great Apostle to the Jews opened the door to the Gentiles through his ministry at the house of Cornelius, his ministry was Jewish (Acts 10:1–11:18; Gal. 2:1–10).



Second, missionary work demands mature and tried men. Barnabas and Paul were both gifted and in the leadership of the church. They were not novices or untested. John Mark was not separated by the Holy Spirit to this work and proved to be a hindrance to this mission.

Third, the characteristic plan of God is for men to be called and sent by twos. This was the practice of our Lord in His earthly ministry, and this was continued through the New Testament. Paul always had his companions and associates.

Fourth, the church is to recognize the call of the Holy Spirit in sending out suitable men. God revealed His will to the church, and the church acted in obedience. This may have been through an inspired prophet or more, but it was made evident to the entire church. God calls men, and He does so through the institution of the church. Note Rom. 10:13–15. Mark the phrase, “And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” This necessarily implies a unified church context and authority.

Fifth, this was not an ordination to the gospel ministry, but consecration to a specific work. Paul was already called by God to be the Apostle to the Gentiles by Divine revelation as he later related before the huge assembly at the Temple (Acts 22:17–22). The time had finally arrived to begin his great life’s work. The church may set men aside for a specific ministry.

Sixth, the action of the church was corporate, definite and symbolic. These were not separate actions employed at different times, but one consummate action on the part of the church.<sup>136</sup> When the church sends out men to a specific work, it is responding to what it believes is the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The laying on of hands is symbolic; the fasting expresses the seriousness of the action and the prayers signify a spiritual kinship and promised intercession. The laying on of hands with prayer ought to characterize any specific missionary ministry of the church.

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<sup>136</sup> Acts 13:4, [τότε νηστεύσαντες καὶ προσευξάμενοι καὶ ἐπιθέντες τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς ἀπέλυσαν]. All aor. ptcs culminating in the main verb, “sent them away.”

Seventh, auxiliary “ministries” are questionable. John Mark, the nephew of Barnabas accompanied them as an attendant,<sup>137</sup> evidently to care for non-ministerial issues, e.g., caring for baggage, food, sailing passage, etc. But he deserted<sup>138</sup> the mission, and ultimately led to the separation of Paul and Barnabas. He later proved himself, but at this point was a distraction and obstacle to the mission. It is a Divine call to the work, not pragmatism, convenience, relationship or favoritism which must determine those on the mission.

Eighth, the ministry was reported to the sending church. Paul and Barnabas reported to their home church once the ministry was completed. Missionary reports do much good and keep a prayerful focus on the work. The sending church profits much spiritually from such reports.

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#### From Antioch to Cyprus:

Sergius Paulus the Proconsul and Elymas the Sorcerer

[Acts 13:4–12]

Why did Barnabas and Paul go to the island of Cyprus first? There are several possible reasons: the church at Antioch had a number of Cypriots in its founding and membership (Acts 11:19–21). Barnabas, who headed this trip at the beginning, was a Cypriot and doubtless had relatives there. Cyprus was the mythical birthplace of Venus, worshipped as the Paphian Aphrodite, but also had a huge Jewish population with many synagogues.<sup>139</sup> The island was prosperous agriculturally, commercially with its seaports, and was famous for its copper mines once controlled by Herod, thus many Jews inhabited it.

Further, Cyprus may have been home to a number of Christians from the time of Saul’s persecution onward. Cyprus was the closest unevangelized land to Antioch—sixty miles by

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<sup>137</sup> ὑπηρέτης, an attendant, a subordinate, an assistant.

<sup>138</sup> τὸν ἀποστάντα ἀπ’ αὐτῶν. From ἀφίστημι, withdraw, retire, revolt, shrink from, recoil from.

<sup>139</sup> During the Jewish rebellion under the Emperor Trajan (98–117), 240,000 Jews were massacred on Cyprus.

sea. Mount Casius, rising from the seacoast to 5,000 feet elevation, could be seen from Selucia.

The land route would have been plagued with robbers and would have also led into Cilicia, which Paul had already evangelized to a given extent. The sailing season lasted roughly from the end of February to early October. In the springtime the prevailing westerly summer winds would not impede their sailing to Salamis, which was to the southwest.

The three men worked their way throughout the island from Salamis in the northeast to Paphos on the southwest, preaching in the various synagogues (Acts 13:4–6). This was a journey of some 100 miles. They arrived in the spring and did not leave for Pamphylia until that summer. Time had to be taken to establish assemblies of believers if the evangelism proved effective. Luke's record is very sparse.

The trip ended at Paphos, which, with the sailing winds, would take them directly across to the area of Pamphylia in Asia Minor. Some time had to elapse for their ministry to come to the attention of Sergius Paulus, the Roman Proconsul of Cyprus.<sup>140</sup>

The Proconsul called them to an audience, desiring to hear their religious message. A Jewish charlatan, Bar-Jesus [Son of Joshua] withstood them and sought to contradict their message. He was influential with the Proconsul, and may have been in his employment as an advisor. Paul on this occasion performed his first recorded miracle, called him a son of the devil and struck him blind. This led to the amazement and belief of Sergius Paulus.

Note: The old Roman religions had lost their power and influence. Many Roman government officials either espoused some Greek philosophical opinions or were given to Oriental mysticism, sorcerers, fortune tellers and self-proclaimed prophets. Elymas was simply one of many (e.g., Simon the Sorcerer, Acts 8:9ff; sons of Sceva, Acts 19:11–20). There is a *characterismos*, a play on words: "Barjesus [Βαρϊησοῦς]," "Son

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<sup>140</sup> Roman Provinces were either under the direct jurisdiction of the emperor and ruled by a Procurator, or under the Roman Senate and ruled by a Proconsul.

of Joshua.” Paul called him a “son of the devil.” Elymas [אֵלִימָא] was Aramaic for “wise” or “powerful.” Elymas was neither.

Note: Apostolic miracles were not performed by the inherent power within the Apostle or individual, or at his initiative, nor was it static to be used at one’s prerogative. Such miracles were performed by the impulse and under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were not “miracle workers” or “faith healers.” The power was of God and was demonstrated only by His permission.

The Apostle Paul himself was stricken with a debilitating disease which he could not heal (2 Cor. 12:7–9). He could not heal Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25–30), nor Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20). Yet at other times God worked mightily through Paul in absentia to demonstrate His Divine power over the magical arts at Ephesus (Acts 19:11–20).

Luke changes Saul’s name to “Paul,” a Greek name more suited to his office as the Apostle to the Gentiles. There is a further, very practical reason: the term *saulos* [the Grecianized form and terminus–*os* of the Hebrew name] might be mistaken for a term which described the gait and behavior of an openly immoral or perverted person.<sup>141</sup> Such misunderstanding would have wrought confusion, derision and may even have proven fatal to the mission among pagan Gentiles, whose societies countenanced their male and female prostitutes. He also gave precedence to Paul over Barnabas as the main preacher. With this confrontation and miracle, Paul providentially assumed his position as the preeminent Apostle.

#### From Cyprus to Antioch in Pisidia

[Acts 13:13–52]

Paul and his company sailed across the Pamphylian Sea to the Bay and seaport of Attaleia, a sea trip of some 170 miles. Perga, the main city, was twelve miles distance from Attaleia, and was located six miles inland from the mouth of the Cestrus

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<sup>141</sup> *Saulos*, an adj., referred to the seductive walk and behavior of a prostitute, and that pagan society was noted for female, homosexual and cultic prostitutes. See H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek–English Lexicon*, p. 1586. See also Robert L. Reymond, *Op. cit.*, p. 121, referring to Ben Witherington III, *The Paul Quest*, p. 72.

River where three rivers converged. Perga was home to the temple of Diana and a distinctly Greek city, yet evidently had several synagogues. Paul's party did not remain in Perga, but immediately set out and climbed up through the high, hazardous mountain passes for the Phrygian Antioch in the region of Pisidia.

Why did they not evangelize in Perga? It was then summer and the coastal area was plagued with malaria. Most of the population ascended to the high inland plateau in the region of Antioch for the summer months. They would evangelize in Perga on their return, as the season would permit this the next year (Acts 14:24–25).

This mountainous region was haunted by robbers, "Pisidian mountaineers," which presented an ever-present danger. Paul and his company may have become part of a caravan which wound its way up through the hazardous mountain passes of the Taurus range, still covered with patches of snow in the higher elevations. There were also mountain torrents, cascades and cataracts, spawned by the melting snow, with some spanned by narrow bridges; others had to be forded if the bridges had washed out. Paul later writes of "perils of torrents, perils of robbers and perils of the wilderness" (2 Cor. 11:26).

Passing north through the high Taurus range, an alpine country filled with wildlife and fraught with dangers, they descended to the high plateau to the Phrygian capital of Antioch in the region of Pisidia, a journey of 100 miles and at an elevation of 3,600 feet. This plateau alternated between arid areas and marshes and lakes, the largest was a double lake called *liminai*, which provided water for the city by an aqueduct. Antioch, named *Antiocha Caesarea* by Augustus, was a fortress city, surrounded by a high wall and located on the main Roman Road which stretched from Ephesus in the north to Tarsus in the south.

Antioch was centrally located on the inner high plateau of Asia Minor with Perga and Attaleia to the south, the great cities of Galatia to the north, Iconium and the Cilician Gates to the east and south. It was an emporium for the trade of Asia Minor in Angola wool, *cilicium*, lumber, oil and skins, and as most cities

on the eastern frontier, it had its share of oriental mysticism and pagan influences. It was the center of the ancient worship of *Men Archaios* [Μὴν ἀρχαῖος], a male deity, although its temple had been destroyed years earlier.

The city was a Roman *Colonia* and thus the seat of government for that region. With a Roman government and officials, the Jews did not have the freedom to openly persecute the missionaries, but had to resort to fomenting trouble through the influential women and men among the proselytes and the ruling class (Acts 13:50).

There was evidently a large synagogue in Antioch, and possibly smaller ones in the towns of the neighboring region.<sup>142</sup> With the vacating of Perga during that season, the synagogue would have been packed. Here Paul and Barnabas began their evangelistic ministry. While Luke's record only mentions two Sabbaths, the ministry must have lasted much longer because they evangelized throughout the entire region, which must have included various synagogues in the outlying areas (Acts 13:49).

The Sermon Preached at Antioch in Pisidia  
and the Results  
[Acts 13:14–41]

The first sermon preached in this Antiochian synagogue is the only extant synagogue sermon by Paul recorded in the biblical record (Acts 13:14–41). The address to the Athenians on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22–31) is the only extant sermon to a Gentile audience.<sup>143</sup> There are general references, which only give Paul's methodology (e.g., Acts 17:1–3) or a short summary of their essence (e.g., Acts 17:16–18; 28:17–29) and two examples of his testimony (Acts 22:1–22; 26:29).

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<sup>142</sup> Some synagogues were evidently very large. The great synagogue in Alexandria seated 8,000 people. It was so vast that an acolyte or Levite had to wave a banner so the worshippers would know when to say "Amen."

<sup>143</sup> The address of Barnabas and Paul to the Lycaonian people of Lystra declared God as the God of both creation and providence, but was not a formal sermon (Acts 14:8–18).

Note: Nine sermons or speeches by Paul: at Antioch in Pisidia (13:14–43), the abbreviated declaration to the people of Lystra (14:14–17), before the philosophical council in Athens (17:22–34), his farewell address to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (20:17–38), his defense to the mob in Jerusalem (22:1–22), his doctrinal teaching before Felix (24:10–21), his defense before Festus and Herod Agrippa II (26:1–24), his encouragement to the passengers and sailors aboard the ship (27:21–26) and to the Jewish elders at Rome (28:17–20).

As Paul's method was to customarily begin his evangelism in a local synagogue, and his sermon was given in a worship service of the Antiochian synagogue, some note must be taken of this institution and Paul's opportune moment on this occasion.<sup>144</sup>

The three pillars or entities which preserved Judaism from the time of the Babylonian Captivity through the New Testament Era to the final Jewish revolt (c. 586 BC–135 AD) were the Scriptural Canon, the institution of the Synagogue and the class of Rabbis.<sup>145</sup>

The Canon of Scripture revealed the truth and Law of God and a record of Israel's moral and spiritual history. The destruction of the Temple and the Diaspora made the local synagogue central and elevated the Law of Moses. The lack of a local temple and sacrifices negated the necessity of an active priesthood for the Jews of the Diaspora. Scribes or Rabbis copied and interpreted the Law and determined its application to all of life.

The synagogue [συναγωγή, "meeting or gathering place"] was also known as "the house of prayer" [Heb: בֵּית־תְּפִלָּה (Isa. 56:7), Gk: προσευχή or προσευκτήριον] (Acts 16:13), "assembly [congregation] of God" [מִוֶּעַד אֱלֹ] (Ex. 33:7) and "Sabbath place" [σαββάτειον]. Its traditional origins are found in the "Great Synagogue" in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.

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<sup>144</sup> For a short introduction, see the author's *Survey of the Bible*, II, pp. 453–454. For a more detailed description, see A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, I, pp. 430–450; *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*, pp. 254–268.

<sup>145</sup> Werner Foerester, *From the Exile to Christ*, p. 8.

Historically, however, the origins are found in the Captivity and Diaspora, when local meeting places became the center of worship by necessity where there existed ten or more heads of families. Synagogues were numerous throughout the Diaspora, and even Jerusalem was said to have as many as 480. The region about Antioch probably had many small, local synagogues.

The emphasis was on the reading of the Law and prayer. Later, explanations or homilies (Lk. 4:16ff; Acts 13:15ff; 14:1ff) were given (the beginning of the *Targumim*) and schools for the religious education of the young were established. The synagogue thus became central to Jewish life, religious studies, discussion and the administration of justice (Jn. 9:34–35; Acts 9:1–2; 2 Cor. 11:24).

The leader or ruler was the ἀρχισυναγώγος (Mk. 5:36; Lk. 8:41; Acts 18:8). In addition, there were elders [πρεσβύτεροι] who comprised a “Little Sanhedrin” for local religious government and justice. Other officers handled the finances and alms. The Pharisaic party was predominant, as was the promulgation of “the Tradition of the Elders” and the Oral Law. Synagogues were, if possible, located near water sources for ease of ritual cleansing (Acts 16:13).

Architecturally, the synagogue was a rectangular or circular building surrounded by a single or double colonnade adorned with carvings. The *Menorah* was a common symbol. A great, literal *Menorah* was also located in the main room. The synagogue was representative of the Jerusalem Temple to a given degree. Gentile proselytes of the gate [God-fearers] were permitted to attend. Women were secluded from the men behind a lattice work, representing the Court of the Women. The men were seated in the central area which represented the Court of Israel. An elevated place was given for a large box, representative of the Ark, which contained the scrolls of Scripture.

The service began with two prayers, then the recitation of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4–5), which was a declaration of faith.

Note: The *Shema*, from “Hear...” [שְׁמַע], is a declaration of faith in the one and only true God who is a unity [יְהוָה | אֱחָד]: אֱלֹהֵינוּ אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ. The *Kere* [what is spoken] is אֲדֹנָי



[*Adonai*], as יהוה [*Yahweh*], the *Kethubim* [what is written], was considered the Unpronounceable Name of the LORD.

This was followed by the Eighteen Benedictions and then the reading and explanation of the Law, and a homily. On an elevated platform or *Bima* before the Ark was a pulpit, from whence the Scriptures were read. The elders sat before this, facing the congregation. The reader stood; the preacher sat. Paul, as a gospel preacher, would stand.

Once the Scriptural readings were done, one of the Elders, or a visitor was invited to give a *Midrash* or comments on the given reading. This would be concluded with the solemn “Amen.” Paul, wearing a traditional *Tallith* or covering, stood on the *Bima* and may have taken as his text Deuteronomy chapter 1 and Isaiah 1:1–22, which had just been read. He beckoned with his hand and addressed himself to the Jews and the proselytes of the congregation.

Paul’s sermon paralleled that of Stephen’s—a historical exposition of God’s dealings with Israel. To the Old Testament history and passages he quoted, paraphrased or referred to, he gave or summarized with a gospel explanation (Gen. 3:15; Deut. 7:1, 6–8; Ex. 14:8; Numb. 14:34; Josh. 14:1–2; 19:51; Judg. 2:16; 1 Sam. 3:20; 8:5; 10:20–24; 15:23, 13:14; 26, 28; 16:1, 12–13; Psa. 2:7; 16:10; 66:16; 89:20, 28; 132:11; Isa. 53:11; 55:3; Jer. 31:34; Hab. 1:5).<sup>146</sup>

He spoke of David and the Lord Jesus as David’s Seed through whom the promises were fulfilled. This relationship he developed to demonstrate both the crucifixion and the resurrection of our Lord. He concluded with a clear declaration of the forgiveness of sins and justification by faith in Jesus contrasted with a legal righteousness through the law—and then ended with a stern warning.

The results were electrifying (Acts 13:42–52). The congregation and city became divided. Many Jews and Proselytes crowded around the missionaries and desired another sermon the

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<sup>146</sup> Here for the first time are given gospel or New Testament interpretations of some of these Old Testament passages.

next Sabbath. The second Sabbath almost the entire city gathered to hear the gospel, but the Jews, moved with envy, contradicted Paul and blasphemed. Paul and Barnabas then declared that because the Jews had refused the truth, they would turn to the Gentiles. The Gentiles rejoiced and the purpose of God was fulfilled in a great number believing (Acts 13:48).

The Jews then, having no recourse to openly persecute and stone them in a city with Roman government, used their influence to turn the influential women, the men and the city magistrates against them. Luke does not state that they were beaten on this occasion (2 Cor. 11:25).

Paul and Barnabas were forcibly put out of the city, and shook the dust off their sandals as a testimony against them (see Matt. 10:14; Mk. 6:11; Lk. 9:5). But they left believers in that region and evidently baptized them and formed them into assemblies. They would later return and ordain leaders in every church (Acts 14:21–23).

Note: It is significant to note that most of the persecution against the Christians until the Neronian Roman State persecution (c. 64–68 AD) was of Jewish origin, either directly or indirectly. (Jn. 20:19; Acts 4:1–3, 15–21; 5:17–33, 46; 6:8–15; 7:54–59; 8:1–3; 9:1–2, 23; 12:3, 11; 13:45–51; 14:2, 4–6, 19; 17:5–9, 13; 18:12–17; 19:29–33; 20:1–3, 17–19, 22–23; 21:10–14, 27–31; 22:21–23, 30; 23:12–13, 20–21, 30; 24:5–9, 27; 25:1–3, 7, 14–16, 24–25; 26:2, 21; 28:19, 22; 2 Cor. 11:24; 1 Thess. 2:14–16). The two episodes at Philippi (Acts 16:16ff) and Ephesus (Acts 19:11–41) the exceptions.

What was the source of such hatred? Jews held that they alone were the covenant people of God. His only interest in the Gentile world was to condemn it in judgment.<sup>147</sup> To become a member of the covenant people of God, one had to become a Jew, i.e., submit to circumcision and attend to everything which Judaism held sacred, the Law of Moses, even ritual cleansings, food and religious and social relations. Such made Judaism an exclusive and even a self-righteous, esoteric, aloof religion and tended toward pride.

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<sup>147</sup> This was the traditional belief of Nicodemus, who was utterly amazed that God could or would “so love the world,” i.e., the Gentiles as well as the Jews. He was corrected by our Lord (Jn. 3:14–17).

Christian Jews were considered apostates and blasphemers, worthy of death for preaching about a false Messiah from Nazareth, who had been crucified at Jerusalem as a criminal. To declare that salvation was open to all—the free offer of the gospel—to uncircumcised Gentiles as well as Jews, the inability of the Law to justify, that sinners were forgiven of their sins and justified before God by faith in Jesus as the Christ without circumcision and the works of the Law, swept aside, in their thinking, the whole of Scripture and their hope and confidence in circumcision and legal righteousness through the Law.

It left them undone and condemned. They were absolutely blind to the promises in their Scriptures [Old Testament] concerning the suffering Messiah, His death and the glory of His resurrection.<sup>148</sup> The preaching of Christ caused the Jews, who were already prejudiced, to be filled with jealousy, envy [ζήλος, “fervor”] and wrath (Acts 13:45; Rom. 10:19–21; 11:1–12).

Not only were unconverted Jews of this conviction, but the “Judaizers” among professing Jewish Christians at Jerusalem were of the same conviction, i.e., a Gentile had to become a Jew in order to become a Christian. Grace was set aside for circumcision (Acts 15:1ff; the Epistle to the Galatians and sections in several Pauline Epistles). These Judaizers dogged the steps of Paul throughout his missionary travels, seeking to corrupt the gospel of grace and preach circumcision and legalism.

#### At Iconium, Lystra and Derbe

[Acts 13:50–14:20]

The two major Roman Provinces in Asia Minor were Galatia to the north and Cilicia to the south. The Phrygian or Pisidian Antioch bordered Galatia, and Iconium, Lystra and Derbe were Galatian cities, all located to the southeast along the main Roman Road which went from Ephesus in the north to Tarsus in the south through the high, arid plain, which formed the interior of Galatia to the east of the Taurus range.

Leaving the Pisidian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas took the road southwest to Iconium, the capital of Lycaonia and under a different jurisdiction than Antioch, a distance of some sixty miles (Acts 13:51–14:6). This major city was central to fourteen smaller cities. It was located on the high, arid plateau at an

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<sup>148</sup> E.g., see Psa. 2; 22; Isa. 7:14; 9:6–7; 53:1–12.

elevation of 3,370 feet. Fed by two streams from the Taurus range, it was a green oasis, rich in produce. It was also the location of marble quarries and quicksilver mines, a rich source of commercial employment and revenue.

Its population was composed of a large number of Greeks, some Roman officials and military veterans and an established, large Jewish colony which had developed at Iconium from the time of Seleucus Nikator (c. 281 BC). It was the center of worship for the Mother-goddess, Cybele [the “Zizimmene Mother”].

Paul and Barnabas entered the large synagogue there and “so spake”<sup>149</sup> that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed—a spiritual awakening. The apostles<sup>150</sup> were enabled to work “signs and wonders” to credential their message, yet the unbelieving Jews opposed the gospel and instigated a division. Ultimately the whole city was divided. The truth of the gospel will either convict and convert or divide; here both were true. Despite the opposition, the evangelists remained in the area for a considerable time. When matters finally came to a life-threatening crisis, the two fled to Lystra and Derbe, which were under a different governmental jurisdiction.

Lystra (Acts 14:6–19) was southwest along the same Roman Road at a distance of eighteen miles on the plateau, located at the confluence of two streams. To the north were the snowy mountains and to the immediate southwest, the solitary *Kara-Dagh*, or “Back Mountain,” rising into the heights. The city had been made a Roman *Colonia* by Augustus (c. 6 AD), and was home to a number of military veterans.

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<sup>149</sup> Acts 14:1, λαλῆσαι οὕτως, This was more than mere human oratory. The convincing power of the Holy Spirit enabled these men to preach with power and reach the minds, hearts and souls of their hearers.

<sup>150</sup> Both Barnabas and Paul were called “apostles,” not in the official sense in which only Paul was an Apostle, but as those officially sent forth to proclaim the truth [from ἀποστέλλω, to officially send forth].

The city was given to the worship of Zeus [Jupiter], whose temple was before the city gates. The population was basically pagan Lycaonians, who spoke a local dialect; some Greeks, with, perhaps only a handful of Jews and no synagogue. Here the two missionaries faced a wholly pagan city for the first time, and preached throughout the city and surrounding area.

When preaching in the *agora*, Paul fixed his eyes on a man lame from birth and discerned that he had faith to believe and be healed. Paul in a loud voice commanded him to stand up on his feet and he did so, leaping up and walking.<sup>151</sup> The reaction involved the whole community, who took Barnabas to be Jupiter [Zeus] and Paul to be Mercury [Hermes] in human forms.<sup>152</sup> The priest of Jupiter lead a procession and the city made preparations to offer sacrifices to these two whom they supposed to be gods.

Note: Jupiter was represented as tall and stately as the chief god. Mercury was envisioned as smaller and more active. Some have taken this to be a key to the physical appearance of both Barnabas and Paul. The latter was the spokesman and was also smaller and more active, the chief speaker, an allusion to his name, *Paulos*, meaning "Little."

When the missionaries discerned the situation, they immediately sought to stop the proceedings, and finally did so after much persuasion and an informal declaration concerning the one true God of both creation and providence.

Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, subverted the population and prejudiced them against Paul and Barnabas. The Jews from Antioch and Iconium then stoned Paul within the city, then dragged him outside and left him for dead. In a Jewish city and environment, they would have dragged him out of the city before stoning him to avoid shedding blood within the city. Some of the converts, "the disciples," stood about him. Three of these

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<sup>151</sup> A person lame from birth has shriveled limbs, This man's legs and feet were the size and length of an infant's. This was an amazing miracle. Cf. the same with the lame man at the Temple (Acts 3:2–11).

<sup>152</sup> The names Jupiter and Mercury were Roman; Zeus and Hermes were Greek for the same gods.

are known to us: Eunice, Lois and young Timothy (Acts 16:1–3; 1 Tim. 1:1–2; 2 Tim. 3:10–11).

Paul miraculously revived and went back into the city and the next day journeyed on to Derbe. The language [ἀναστὰς εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν] implies that he stood up by himself and was able to walk, suggesting something definitely miraculous about his immediate recovery. The Jews did not pursue Paul, supposing him to be dead and had evidently returned to Iconium and Antioch.

Derbe (Acts 14:20–21) was to the southeast some sixty miles from Lystra. It was located on the Galatian–Cilician border at the very edge of the high plateau at the base of the Taurus range. Just to the south were Tarsus and the Cilician Gates. The stay in Derbe was relatively quiet and peaceful, and must have lasted a considerable length of time, as “they taught many,” i.e., made many disciples or converts [καὶ μαθητεύσαντες]. There is no mention of a synagogue in that place. There was at least one outstanding convert, Gaius, who later became a companion of Paul (Acts 20:4).

#### The Return Journey, Perga and Antioch

[Acts 14:21–28; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2–5; 3:10–12]

Derbe was on the Galatian–Cilician border. The two missionaries, tired and worn, could have gone down through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus and returned to Antioch, but the very nature of the mission necessitated returning to the previous cities to establish and encourage the believers and ordain elders—a scriptural leadership—in every church. New Testament missions work and evangelism were necessarily church-centered. They also warned these believers that being Christians necessarily meant adversity and even persecution from Jews, unbelievers and the world.

On their return, they would have stayed in the homes of various believers. No doubt in Lystra, they stayed with Eunice, Lois and Timothy. Paul was so impressed with the potential of his young convert and his reputation that on his second missionary journey he sought out Timothy for his companion in the ministry.

Perga (Acts 14:24–26) was evangelized on their return trip, the summer malaria season having either not having begun or having passed. The time–frame for this first Gentile missionary journey was about one and a half to two years (c. 47–49). From the seaport of Attaleia, they sailed back on the Pamphilian Sea along the coast of Cilicia and Syria to Antioch on the Orontes.

Upon returning to Antioch, Paul and Barnabas gave a missions report to their home church, recounting all of their mission: its dangers, their success by the grace of God and “the door of faith opened to the Gentiles.” A great step had been taken in the fulfillment of the “Great Commission”—the beginning of going into all the world and preaching the gospel—the message of being saved by grace through faith.

Paul Writes the Epistle to the Galatians (c. 49–50)<sup>153</sup>  
[Gal. 1:1–6:18]

Following the first missionary journey to the Gentiles into Asia Minor and the Province of Galatia [with the smaller regions of Pamphilia, Phrygia and Lycanonia], the “Judaizers” came to the various churches of that province preaching “another Gospel of a different kind, which was not at all a gospel of the same kind” [ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο] (Gal. 1:6–7). This false “gospel” was steeped in the Mosaic Legislation, holding not only to a legal righteousness, but also circumcision. It was an abandonment of grace altogether. The essence was that one must become a Jew in order to become a Christian. It was a return to being Jewish proselytes of righteousness and not being saved, or converted by faith as Gentiles.

In answer to these Judaizers, Paul penned the second epistle of our New Testament, the Epistle of James being the first (c. 44–46). Galatians is the first written apologetic and polemic against legalism and for justification by faith from a New Testament and gospel perspective.

His approach is orderly: first, he vindicates his apostolic authority, which the Judaizers denied (1:1–2:21), stating their heresy (1:6–10) and declaring that his gospel was given to him

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<sup>153</sup> See pp. 285ff.

through Divine revelation and not from man (1:11–17), and that the other Apostles recognized both his message and his ministry (1:18–2:10).

Second, he recounts the confrontation with Peter at Antioch (2:11–21) on the very issue of Jews and Gentiles as Christians equal before God savingly, doctrinally and socially—that the very grace of God was at stake.<sup>154</sup> He declares his own relation to the Lord Jesus in terms of commitment and God's grace (2:20–21).

Third, he works out historically from the Scriptures that justification is by faith without the works of the law (3:1–4:31). The law's purpose was and continues to be [γέγονεν] that of a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ that we may be justified by faith (3:24).

Finally, he works out the truth of justification by faith contrasted with the works of the law in the practicalities of the Christian experience, followed by various practical admonitions (5:1–6:18).

### The Jerusalem Conference: Paul's third trip to Jerusalem (50–51)

[Acts 15:1–35]

#### The Occasion for the Conference

[Acts 15:1, 5]

The immediate occasion for the Jerusalem Conference was the teaching<sup>155</sup> and insistence of the Judaizers or the Pharisaic party in the Jerusalem Church that Gentile believers had to be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5). This would mean a reversion back into Judaism and Gentile believers becoming,

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<sup>154</sup> For Paul's confrontation with Peter, see pp. 91–93 of this volume.

<sup>155</sup> Acts 15:1, ἐδίδασκον, imperf., implying an authoritative, instructive process of some duration. These Judaizers came down from Jerusalem presenting themselves as teachers with authority.



for all practical purposes, Jewish proselytes of righteousness,”<sup>156</sup> i.e., submitting to circumcision to be saved.

Such teaching completely nullified salvation by grace through faith, and so was an abandonment of the gospel—an open and undeniable heresy. Such teaching revived the Mosaic legislation *in toto*, and so embraced a legal righteousness through the law. It necessarily inferred that Christ died in vain and so nullified the work of the cross (Gal. 2:16–21).

#### A Conference, Not a Council

This Jerusalem meeting was the Jerusalem Conference, not the “First Church Council,” as is commonly thought. Jerusalem was not the “Mother Church” in the sense that she was the source of truth and authority, and that the leaders had to go up to Jerusalem for acceptance, or that the Jerusalem Church gave them acceptance and then issued its authoritative decrees. Paul and Barnabas had already had a serious debate and great disagreement with these Judaizers and went up to Jerusalem as messengers or representatives of the Antiochian Church (Acts 15:2–3). This was Paul’s third trip to Jerusalem since his conversion.

This was rather a conference between two sister churches in which members of one church were promulgating false doctrine, so the Antiochian Church took action which rested with the Jerusalem Church and the behavior and teaching of some of its members. The final meeting revealed this with the recommendations<sup>157</sup> which were made. Sadly, there is no record of the Judaizers being directly rebuked, disciplined or excluded for their heresy. The racial, cultural and doctrinal narrowness of the Jerusalem Church remained strong as an essentially Jewish church (Acts 21:17–27).

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<sup>156</sup> For a discussion of proselytes of righteousness and proselytes of the gate, see pp. 83–84.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Acts 16:4, “decrees,” τὰ δόγματα, in the sense of an opinion or judgment, not an official decree.

### The Substance of the Conference

After several private discussions and meetings, the whole church assembled to hear the testimonies and recommendations. There were four speakers: Peter, Paul, Barnabas and James. The testimony of Peter recounting the conversion of the household of Cornelius, attended with the descent of the Holy Spirit and gift of tongues was acknowledged (Acts 10:1–11:18). He further stated that the Mosaic legislation was a burdensome yoke, and that Jews and Gentiles were saved the same way—by grace through faith (Acts 15:7–11). The testimony of Paul and Barnabas concerning their first missionary journey, which was attended with and credentialed by signs and wonders, was received (Acts 13:9–11; 14:3, 9–10).

The recommendations by James concerning the Gentile believers (Acts 15:13–20), if not based upon the Noahic Covenant (Gen. 9), at least made things more comfortable for Jewish believers in their relationship to Gentile believers. It is further to be noted that the recommendations of the conference did not challenge the Jewish narrowness or stop the Judaizers, who continued seeking to subvert Gentile believers, as is noted in various sections of Paul's Epistles. As to the initial reason for the Jerusalem Conference, it was largely a failure.

Note: James quoted Amos 9:11–12 in Acts 15:15–18. This quotation was from the LXX, which varies from the Hebrew [MT]. James meant to show that the inclusion of the Gentiles as the people of God had been prophesied by Amos. Dispensationalists take this to denote that at the end of this age the temple will be rebuilt and the millennium will be ushered in with Jewish characteristics, sacrifices, etc. The Scofield Reference Bible states that "Dispensationally, this is the most important passage in the New Testament." Such thinking or interpretation is not what James had in mind, but a then present work of God among the Gentiles.

### The Result of the Conference

[Acts 15:22–29]

A letter explaining the substance of the conference and the recommendations was sent from the church, with the Apostles and elders, to the churches in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia, evidently where the Judaizers had been most active in seeking to

subvert Gentile believers. The letter was accompanied by Paul and Barnabas and also by representatives of the Jerusalem Church, Judas and Silas. Any questions could and would then be answered in full by those who had been at the conference and who represented both churches.

### Paul's Second Missionary Journey (c. 50–53)

[Harmony: Acts 15:36–18:22; Rom. 16:3, 21–23; 1 Thess. 2:1–14; 2 Thess.; 1 Tim. 1:2; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:2, 5–6]

#### Summary of the Second Missionary Journey

Scripture references: Acts 15:36–18:22; Rom. 16:3, 21–23; 1 Thess. 2:1–14; 2 Thess.; 1 Tim. 1:2; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:2, 5–6. Time-frame: c. 50–53 AD, two to three years. Miles traveled: approximately 2,800. Provinces and cities visited: in Syria, Cilicia; in Galatia: Tarsus, Derbe, Lystra, Iconium; in Mysia: Troas; in Macedonia: Neapolis, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea; in Achaia: Athens, Cenchrea, Corinth, where Paul spent almost two years; in Asia: Ephesus; in Judea: Jerusalem; in Syria: Antioch.

Salient issues: Barnabas and Paul separate, Paul and Silas proceed to the churches of Cilicia and Galatia. Paul takes Timothy as his companion. Luke joins the group at Troas, leaves after Philippi. At Philippi the gospel enters Europe. Paul writes 1 & 2 Thessalonians from Corinth. The first intellectual confrontation between Biblical Christianity and Greek philosophy at Athens.

#### Paul and Barnabas Separate; Silas Replaces Barnabas

Paul and Barnabas, after a very sharp contention,<sup>158</sup> separated over taking John Mark with them. Barnabas took Mark and “sailed to Cyprus and out of the Book of Acts.” Who was right and who was wrong in this sad situation? Any blame may rest with both. Paul was an inspired Apostle, but he was not perfect. He had good cause to refuse John Mark who had deserted the work in Pamphilia. Perhaps there was some residual issue with the confrontation at Antioch (Gal. 2:11–13)?

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<sup>158</sup> Acts 15:39, ἐγένετο δὲ παροξυσμός, “became so sharp,” i.e., produced such a sharp painfulness.

Barnabas saw the young man's potential, and he evidently finally lived up to his uncle's expectation and later became a helper to Paul (2 Tim. 4:11). Paul and Barnabas evidently never met again, but Paul mentions him in a favorable light, and he was evidently known to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 9:6). We must leave the situation to Divine providence.

The church stood with Paul and Silas, sending them forth. Evidently, Barnabas and John Mark left on their own (Acts 15:40). Paul took Silas and went throughout Syria, Cilicia and Galatia strengthening the churches and taking the letter from the Jerusalem Conference (Acts 15:36–41). It is not known if Barnabas, to that point Paul's closest friend and companion, was a Roman citizen. Silas was, and this meant equal treatment under Roman law, perhaps a providential situation.

#### The Churches of Cilicia

Paul and Silas went overland from Antioch on the Orontes, crossing the river bridge and going north through Syria and up to Cilicia, through the "Cilician Gates" to Tarsus. What was the origin of these Cilician churches? We read nowhere of their planting. These churches must have been the fruit of Paul's first evangelistic work during his "silent years" in Tarsus and Cilicia before Barnabas sought him out and brought him down to Antioch.

#### Timothy becomes Paul's Closest Companion

Timothy was added to the missionary party at Lystra (Acts 16:1–3). This young man had a sterling reputation in the general area as an evangelist. He would become Paul's closest companion and helper, a true "son" both as his convert and in their close relationship in the gospel ministry. He was inseparable from Paul except when sent on a mission. Paul acknowledged him repeatedly in his Epistles, and always with some recognition of their relationship or his service to the Apostle. Timothy was Paul's closest friend, confidant, laborer and "son." (Cf. Acts 17:14–15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10, 24; 2 Cor. 1:1, 19; Phil. 1:1; 2:19; Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Thess. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 6:20–21; 2 Tim. 1:2; 4:22; Phlm. 1:1; Heb. 13:23, 25).

Only Luke would become a close companion for much of Paul's ministry, and became, perhaps, his personal physician (2 Cor. 13:14; Col. 4:14; Phlm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11). Others, such as Titus, Aristarcus, Tychicus, Sopater, Epaphroditus, Priscilla and Aquila, etc., were occasional companions and helpers.

What was the consistency in refusing to have Titus circumcised (Gal. 2:3) and yet circumcising Timothy? Titus was a Greek, a Gentile. In his case salvation by grace through faith was the issue with the Judaizers. Timothy was an uncircumcised Jew through his mother's lineage, a situation which would have proven to be a great obstacle when evangelizing among the Jews.<sup>159</sup> Paul was simply being consistent and avoiding unnecessary conflict.

He made a distinction between his own Jewish culture and the truth of the gospel of grace. As a Jew he took vows and shaved his head (Acts 18:16), and accommodated the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem (Acts 21:19–26). He was all things to all men as long as the truth of the gospel was not compromised (1 Cor. 9:19–23).

Troas and the Macedonian Vision:  
The Gospel enters Europe (c. 50–51)  
[Acts 16:8–11]

In spite of the desire to re-enter the Pisidian Antioch, Perga and the Provinces of Asia Minor, Bithynia and Mysia, the Holy Spirit led them providentially from Iconium to Troas, thirty miles south of the ancient plain and site of Troy. Troas was a seaport from which they could see the highlands of Samothrace and Macedonia. There Paul received a vision in the night, a man of Macedonia, beseeching him to come over and help them. This marks the great move to Europe and the West—and would

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<sup>159</sup> John B. Polhill, *New American Commentary, Acts*, p. 343, both text and footnote 6. Timothy's father was a Greek and there was evidently little Jewish orthodoxy in the home or in the community, with no synagogue. But one was still considered a Jew through his mother's lineage.

determine the direction of Christianity and even Western Civilization for centuries.

At this point, Luke, the author of Acts, enters the picture as the fourth member of Paul's missionary group. His presence or absence may be traced by the "they" and "we" sections. The "we" sections are: Acts 16:10–17; 20:5–21:18; 27:1–28:16. Luke may have been at Antioch in Syria previous to his sudden appearance at Troas. They leave him at Philippi and he may have remained there to oversee the new work.

Note: Luke [Λουκᾶς, a shortened form of Λουκανός, "light-bearing, illumination."] [Not to be confused with "Lucius," Λούκιος a Jewish believer: Acts 13:1; Rom. 16:21] is the author of almost one-fourth of the New Testament. His Gospel account is the longest New Testament book and the Book of Acts is the second-longest. Both were written in a classical, literary style with formal introductions (Lk. 1:1–4; Acts 1:1ff).

Luke is mentioned three times in the New Testament: Col. 4:14, where he is listed separately from those of the circumcision and described as Paul's "beloved physician," in Phlm. 24 as a "fellow-worker" [συνεργός] with Paul; and in 2 Tim. 4:11 as Paul's only companion during his final imprisonment. There is a fourth occurrence in the traditional postscript to 2 Cor. 13:14.<sup>160</sup>

Luke was evidently a Greek,<sup>161</sup> an early convert to Christianity and possibly from the Syrian Antioch.<sup>162</sup> As a physician by calling, he was probably educated at Tarsus in Cilicia. If so, he might have known Paul from his university days or his early evangelistic efforts in Cilicia. Luke's writings reveal an educated, literary education and the mind and accuracy of an astute historian. He was a physician, a historian, an evangelist and one of the greatest and most-gifted authors of the New Testament.

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<sup>160</sup> Cf. the *Stephanus Text* or *Textus Receptus*.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Acts 28:2. "barbarous" [βάρβαροι] denotes non-Greek speaking people, not uncivilized—a Greek designation.

<sup>162</sup> The Codex Beza [D] contains the genitive absolute, συνεστραμμένων δὲ ἡμῶν, "when we were gathered together," an alleged first "we" section, implying that Luke was part of the Antiochan church from the beginning and with Paul before his missionary journeys. See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of Luke's Gospel*, p. 6–7; Bruce M. Metzger, *Textual Commentary on the Gk. NT*, p. 391 and most critical commentaries, NT Introductions and NT Surveys.

He joined the Apostle Paul at Troas and may have remained in Philippi; then joined him again at Philippi when Paul traveled on his final journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:1ff). Note the “they” and the “we” sections of Acts. He remained with Paul throughout his incarceration at Caesarea for two years<sup>163</sup> and accompanied him to Rome, remaining with him during his first imprisonment and then his second and final imprisonment (Acts 21:1ff; 27:1ff; 28:16ff; 2 Tim. 4:11). At least twice and possibly thrice Luke and John Mark were together—during both imprisonments (Phlm. 24; 2 Tim. 4:11), and possibly at Antioch before Paul’s first missionary journey.

Paul and His Party at Philippi (c. 50–51)  
The Establishment of the first Church in Europe  
[Acts 16:12–40]

From Troas, Paul and his missionary group sailed across the northeastern part of the Aegean Sea, across two large bays to the east, and the two islands of Imbros and Samothrace. Two high mountains dominated the horizon and had provided navigational points from ancient times: the headland of Samothrace, 5,000 feet in elevation, and Mount Athos on the island of Lemnos to the southeast.

Their ship anchored for the night on the lee side of Samothrace, then sailed to Neapolis, the harbor for Philippi. The trip took two days with the favorable prevailing winds (Acts 16:11–12).<sup>164</sup> From Neapolis, over a ridge of high ground, and at a distance of twelve miles, lay Philippi, the chief city of one of the four districts of Macedonia.

Note: Philippi was situated on the Via Egnatia, or Eastern Way,<sup>165</sup> the main Roman road which connected Rome with the eastern part of the empire and stretched across Thrace,

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<sup>163</sup> It was probably during these two years that Luke traveled throughout Judea and Galilee and interviewed the persons for his Gospel record.

<sup>164</sup> The prevailing winds pushed up from the south. Their return trip took five days, against the prevailing winds and necessitated constant tacking (Acts 20:6).

<sup>165</sup> Built in the second century BC by Gnaeus Egnatius, Proconsul of Macedonia. It would ultimately link Rome to Constantinople by the third century AD.

Macedonia and Illyricum, connecting the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. This was a major paved Roman military Road and also a heavily traveled commercial thoroughfare.

Paul and his company would travel along this road through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica. Berea [βέροα] was south of the Via Egnatia in a more remote area on the coast with its own harbor. From here, Paul would take ship for Athens, then Corinth (Acts 17:10–15). It is possible that, on his third missionary journey, Paul followed the Via Egnatia through to Illyricum and Dalmatia, preaching the gospel (Rom. 15:19; 2 Tim. 4:10).

### The History and Significance of Philippi

Originally called Daton, then Krinides [“Little Springs”], Philippi was established by Thasian colonists c. 360 BC. It was renamed after Philip II of Macedon conquered it. The city held a strategic position under both the Greek and Romans. For the later Romans, who conquered the Greeks in 168 BC, it guarded the eastern edge of the empire along the Via Egnatia.

Philippi was the site of the decisive battle between the forces of Antony and Octavian and Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus in the Roman Civil War, 42 BC. Antony and Octavian proved victorious and with the accession of Octavian as Caesar Augustus, the Roman Republic became the Roman Empire. Philippi was reorganized as a Roman Colony, peopled with military veterans and finally renamed *Colonia Augustus Iulia Philippensis* in 27 BC.

As a Roman *Colonia*, Philippi was an independent city ruled by magistrates. It was a wealthy and prosperous city due to its situation on the *Via Egnatia* and its copper and gold mines. The city was located on the northern edge of a long plateau which extended southwest to Thessalonica—a long, fertile valley cut by rivers and several lakes; it was filled with orchards, vineyards and olive groves, the hills and mountainsides with pine forests—an area rich in both history and agriculture.

Philippi had no significant Jewish population and thus no synagogue. Some God-fearing<sup>166</sup> women met at a *proseuche*

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<sup>166</sup> Jewish proselytes of the gate. See pp. 83–84.



[προσεύχη], or place of prayer along the Gangites River on the Sabbath (Acts 16:12–13). Such sites were usually near water for the purposes of purification. Here Paul and his companions engaged the women in religious and evangelistic conversation.

The first convert was Lydia, a seller of purple,<sup>167</sup> “whose heart the Lord opened” to give close attention to the message.<sup>168</sup> She was baptized with her household, professing faith in the Lord Jesus. She then offered her hospitality and provided a home for the missionaries and probably a meeting place for the church (Acts 16:14–16).

Note: The first order of preaching is to gain the attention of the hearers. Preachers must open the Scriptures and declare the Word with unction [ἀποφθέγγομαι], authority [καταγγέλλω], conviction and utmost sincerity.

Note: Household baptisms. Lydia’s household would have included her workers and possibly family members. There is no mention of her being married, and thus, no children or infants. In every other case of household baptisms, it is stated that those who believed were baptized (Acts 16:27–34). The New Testament knows nothing of infant baptism or sprinkling.

The scriptural record is that baptism was by immersion, as typifying the believer’s identification in the Savior’s death, burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:3–5). The very terms “baptize” and “baptism” derive from the root *baph* [βαφ], meaning “depth.” The argument that baptism replaced circumcision is erroneous. The Old Covenant sign was circumcision; the New or Gospel Covenant sign is regeneration, not baptism—a “circumcision made without hands” (Col. 2:11), a “circumcision of the heart” (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Rom. 2:28–29).

The argument that infant sprinkling replaced circumcision and is thus a seal of the covenant does not have scriptural support.

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<sup>167</sup> Lydia either made the purple dye or sold fabrics manufactured from such. The dye was made from the murex shellfish. The purple dye and the fabrics dyed were very lucrative businesses, and the clothing highly prized. Lydia was probably a wealthy woman.

<sup>168</sup> The suddenness of conversion as the immediate manifestation of regenerating grace is marked in such cases as Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1–21), the Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:1–29), Zacchaeus (Lk. 19:1–10), the 3,000 on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:36–41), Paul (Acts 9:3ff), Sergius Paulus (Acts 13:7–12), the Philippian Jailer (Acts 16:27–34).

Abraham was circumcised as a believer, and so to him alone was circumcision a seal of the righteousness of his faith (Rom. 4:9ff). The Scriptures clearly teach believer's baptism by immersion.<sup>169</sup> To change either subjects or mode would mean an altogether different type and reason for this rite.

A young, demon-possessed slave girl<sup>170</sup> which provided her owners with a profitable living, kept following Paul and Silas, and declaring that they were slaves of the most high God [οἱ ἄνθρωποι δοῦλοι τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου εἰσίν]. This became a habitual occurrence, until Paul turned, rebuked the spirit, and cast it out in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 16:18). He neither wanted nor needed the advertisement of the devil.

When her masters saw that their lucrative income was gone, they dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates. They brought false charges, played upon the anti-Semitism<sup>171</sup> of the judges and people, and charged them with teaching heretical doctrines and customs (16:19–21). The scene was close to mob hysteria.

The magistrates had Paul and Silas stripped of their clothing and had them beaten by the lictors<sup>172</sup> with many stripes—all

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<sup>169</sup> For a thorough study, the reader is referred to the author's *The New Testament Church*, pp. 35–36, 39, 57–67, and *A Catechism on Bible Doctrine*, pp. 301–306.

<sup>170</sup> Possessed with the spirit of Python [πνεῦμα πύθωνια], which spoke through her; she was a ventriloquist. The python spirit was a very prominent spirit in the religion of ancient Greece, whose abode was at Delphi at the foot of Mt. Parnassus in central Greece. The serpent came from Gaia, the mother of the earth. Evidently the spirit through this slave girl gave actual information and she was the source of a lucrative income for her owners. The spirit certainly spoke the truth concerning Paul and Silas.

<sup>171</sup> This was about a year after Claudius Caesar commanded that all Jews leave Rome (c. 49) (Acts 18:1). Anti-Semitism was on the rise in the empire.

<sup>172</sup> The fasces was the bundle carried by the Roman lictors. It consisted of a bundle of stout elm rods about an inch and a half thick and five feet long. In the middle of the bundle was a protruding axe. The bundle [*facsis*] was held together by a red leather strap, with which the person was tied. The rods for beating, the axe for execution.

without giving them a hearing or a trial.<sup>173</sup> Paul and Silas were handed over to the jailer with a charge to incarcerate them securely. He put them into the stocks in the inner prison, which was filthy and vermin-ridden.

Note: The Roman stocks were instruments of torture, consisting of a straight board with five holes: the central one for the head, the next two for the wrists and outer two for the feet. The legs and hips were then forced into the stocks with the tendency to pull the hips out of socket. The prisoner was then forced to lie on his back amidst the defecation, urine, vermin and filth. The stocks were chained to the wall of the prison. Apart from the stocks, the other prisoners were housed separately and chained to the walls by their legs or wrists.

In this awful condition, bruised, bleeding and swollen with possible bone fractures, Paul and Silas at midnight sang praises to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.<sup>174</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake. The prison doors flew open and the chains were loosened from the walls. The jailer, believing that the prisoners had escaped, was about to commit suicide when Paul called out to him to do himself no harm—all the prisoners, no doubt in amazement at the situation—were all accounted for.<sup>175</sup>

The scene is literal for what is also true spiritually at salvation: he called for a light, came trembling and asked what he had to do to be saved, then he brought forth fruits meet for repentance. He, believing with all of his house, washed and fed Paul and Silas. Works meet for repentance.

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<sup>173</sup> See pp. 68–69 for a description of the Roman method of flogging. There was no limit to the stripes, as with the Jewish form of flogging.

<sup>174</sup> Acts 16:25. ...ἐπηκροῶντο δὲ αὐτῶν οἱ δέσμιαι, imperf. vb., “and were listening to them the other prisoners”—implying a given length of time. They literally had a captive audience as they praised God in their awful condition.

<sup>175</sup> Jailers had very trusted positions under Roman law, but if a prisoner escaped, his sentence was to be carried out on the jailer. This is why he considered suicide rather than be subjected to the torture, humiliation and death that might await him.

The next morning, the magistrates sent to have Paul and Silas released. Paul then proclaimed their Roman citizenship to the amazement and fear of the magistrates,<sup>176</sup> who had far overreached their authority and had beaten them without a hearing or a trial.<sup>177</sup> The city was in danger of losing its privileges as a *Colonia* and the magistrates of losing much more. The city leaders asked them to depart, but Paul took his time and met with the church before departing, giving it a good testimony before the city through his dignity and self-possession.

What strange ways God has of building a church—a women’s prayer meeting, spiritual, legal and illegal opposition, torture and incarceration! And what a membership: a wealthy, generous lady, some textile workers, some women proselytes, a former demon-possessed slave girl, the city jailer and even, perhaps, some prisoners!

Note: Women converts to Christianity. Judaism was a male-dominated religion and centered around a patriarchal form. Christianity held men and women to be equal before God as believers, while maintaining the headship of the man in marriage and church leadership. The New Testament and Paul’s Epistles both name and describe the prominent role of women in the work of the gospel (Matt. 28:1ff; Mk. 15:40–41; Lk. 8:2–3; 23:49, 55; 24:1–10; Acts 1:14; 16:13; 17:4, 12; 18:2, 18, 26; Rom. 16:1–16; 1 Cor. 16:19; Phil. 4:1–3; 1 Tim. 2:8–16; 2 Tim. 4:19; Tit. 2:3–5; 1 Pet. 3:1–7).

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<sup>176</sup> Paul and Silas could have each declared “I am a Roman citizen!” [*civis romanus sum*], which could not be falsely uttered under penalty of death, or produced their proof of citizenship with their *diptychs*. Evidently the quick and frenzied action of the mob may have prevented this. See p. 53.

<sup>177</sup> The magistrates had violated two Roman Laws: The *Valerian* and *Porcian* laws which exempted Roman citizens from degrading and shameful forms of punishment, such as whipping, scourging, or crucifixion. They also established certain rights for Roman citizens, including *Provocatio*, the right to appeal to the tribunes of the plebs. See Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, p. 239.

## Paul at Thessalonica (c. 51)

[Acts 17:1–10]

Paul, Silas and Timothy traveled down the *Via Egnatia* thirty–three miles to Amphipolis,<sup>178</sup> then another thirty miles to Apollonia. They continued through these cities, as there were no synagogues. Their conveyances are not revealed. In their bruised, swollen and bloodied condition, they could not have walked far.<sup>179</sup> As this main road was heavily used for commerce, it is probable that they went by cart or on horseback. From Apollonia to Thessalonica was a distance of thirty–seven miles.

Thessalonica,<sup>180</sup> situated on the Axios River, was the central city of all Macedonia, an *Urbs Libera*, or Free City, and the seat of government was overseen by a proconsul. The municipal government was under the authority of *Politarchs*. It was a great commercial city and seaport with a population of some 200,000. There was evidently one great central synagogue, a large Jewish population and a great multitude of proselytes, including some of high social and civil standing.

Paul went three consecutive Sabbath days into the synagogue and reasoned with them from the Scriptures—his customary method of evangelism to the Jews and proselytes.<sup>181</sup> Paul's synagogue evangelistic method was exegetical or expository and logical. He thoroughly opened the Scriptures [exegesis and

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<sup>178</sup> Amphipolis had the ancient name of “The Nine Ways” as it was the intersection of various main routes to Macedonia, Thrace and the sea. Also called “The Surrounded City” because it was situated at a bend of the Strymon River which bordered it on three sides.

<sup>179</sup> See Acts 16:33, the jailer washed their wounds, implying open wounds from the severe beatings.

<sup>180</sup> The city was named after the step–sister of Alexander the Great, Θεσσαλονίκη, or “Thessilian victory.”

<sup>181</sup> Acts 17:1–3. This gives Paul's customary procedure [κατὰ δὲ τὸ εἶωθός] and preaching methodology: ...διελέξατο αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν γραφῶν, διανοίγων καὶ παρατιθέμενος... The vb. is “reasoned,” the two pres. ptcs. demonstrate his approach, “exegesis, or thoroughly opening and explaining” the Scriptures and “putting forth his logical deductions or conclusions” that Jesus was the Christ.

exposition] then brought forth his reasons for the nature of the Messiah and His coming, then powerfully declared that Jesus was the promised Christ.<sup>182</sup> The one example (Acts 13:14–41) reveals that he boldly preached against a legal righteousness and clearly declared justification by faith.

Some Jews believed and were providentially given to Paul and Silas as true converts.<sup>183</sup> One of these was Aristarchus, who later accompanied Paul (Acts 19:29; 20:4; 27:2; Col. 4:10; Phlm. 24). A large number of proselytes and many women of high social standing were also converted—a predominantly Gentile church.

This was unbearable to the strict Jews. They could not take direct action in a Greco–Roman city, so they paid and used the loafers and unemployed rabble from the public square to instigate a city-wide riot.<sup>184</sup> Religious charges would be to no avail, so political charges were brought: insurrection and sedition. This occurred some months after Claudius had commanded all Jews to leave Rome, implying a suspicious and anti–Semitic attitude.

They inadvertently stated the effect of Paul’s evangelism; it was turning the world upside down! The missionaries escaped, and Jason, their host, and others had to post bond to secure the

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<sup>182</sup> Acts 17:3, “preach,” καταγγέλλω, to declare with authority. The same term is used in v. 22 for the address before the Athenian philosophers. Of the several terms used for preaching, καταγγέλλω denotes to declare with utmost authority.

The other very significant term, used only 3 times in the New Testament, and all in the Acts, is ἀποφθέγγομαι, “to intelligently proclaim in an elevated, persuasive, prophetic voice and manner—a philosophical or prophetic discourse.” Each occurrence is significant. See. Acts 2:4, “utterance” [ἀποφθέγγεσθαι]; 2:14, “spake” [ἀπεφθέξατο], and 26:25, “speak forth” [ἀποφθέγγομαι].

<sup>183</sup> Acts 17:4, “consorted with,” προσεκληρώθησαν, aor. pass. lit: “allotted to,” i.e., providentially converted and numbered with Paul and Silas.

<sup>184</sup> The term “lewd” meant the common people [τινὰς ποινηροὺς], then, bad characters, the loafers who roamed the *agora*. It did not at that time have the moral connotation it presently has.

peace. Timothy evidently remained to oversee the work and later came to Paul when he was departing from Berea.

Although Luke describes Paul's synagogue ministry as lasting for three Sabbaths, it must have been much longer and embraced the entire city as converts, mostly proselytes and Greeks, were won to Christ. Here, Paul had to earn a living by his trade in working *cilicum* (1 Thess. 2:9).

Twice during this time, the church at Philippi sent him either foodstuff or financial aid (Phil. 4:10–16), implying not only his need, but also an extended period of time. Although the biblical record does not state the added reason, a harsh famine occurred during that time and the price of wheat was raised to six times its usual rate.<sup>185</sup> The Philippian church rose to the occasion without being asked. They knew of the need and acted promptly in supplying it twice.

Perhaps the best commentary on Paul's ministry among the Thessalonians can be found in his two letters to the church there, the first probably written from Corinth after his departure from Thessalonica.

These reveal his having to work to provide a living (1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:7–10), his experiences among them and his deep love for them (1 Thess. 1:5–7; 2:1–8, 11; 2:17–20; 3:5–13; 2 Thess. 2:13–17), their acceptance of the truth and the trials they experienced (1 Thess. 1:2–9; 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:3–6), the persecution of the Jews (1 Thess. 2:14–16), his practical admonitions (1 Thess. 4:1–12; 5:11–26; 2 Thess. 3:3–16), the eschatological comfort he gave them (1 Thess. 4:13–18; 2 Thess. 1:6–10; 2:1–12) and the intercessory prayers he desired from them (2 Thess. 3:1–2). It is noteworthy that he saw satanic opposition in the action of the Jews and government officials (1 Thess. 2:17–18).

Paul at Berea (c. 51)

[Acts 17:10–14]

The two missionaries escaped Thessalonica by night, crossed the Axios River and instead of continuing on the *Via Egnatia*

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<sup>185</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit.*, p. 507.

westward to Pella<sup>186</sup> and Edessa, turned off the main road into the coastal mountains some forty–five miles south to Berea. This city lay on the eastern slope of the Olympian Range. The country was agricultural in the valleys, but also mountainous and heavily forested. This route probably gave them a greater length of time at Berea, as the Jews would naturally pursue or put out a warning through their commercial contacts along the main thoroughfare to the west.

Upon reaching Berea, Paul and Silas went into the synagogue and preached. The results were greater and more favorable than in Thessalonica and there was no initial opposition. Rather, the Jews and proselytes searched the Scriptures to verify the preaching. Many believed and the work of the gospel evidently went well beyond the synagogue and continued for some time.

The Jews of Thessalonica finally heard of this work and immediately agitated the populace. Without waiting for a riot or false charges, the converts immediately sent Paul away to the sea, as his person and preaching were the focus of the opposition.

Note: Acts 17:14. There is disagreement as to how the new converts accompanied Paul to Athens. Some hold that they sought to deceive the Jews by going to the coast, then traveling overland down to Athens, as the coastal harbor is not mentioned. Others maintain that they accompanied Paul to the sea and some took him to Athens by ship. The language does not necessitate either a deception or travel by land [εὐθέως δὲ τότε τὸν Παῦλον ἐξαπέστειλαν οἱ ἀδελφοὶ πορεύεσθαι ἕως ἐπὶ τὴν θάλασσαν], but simply that they accompanied him to the sea. The Jews could not have stopped Paul once he was aboard a ship or while he was sailing from the port.

Timothy, who had just arrived, remained at Berea, as did Silas. They would establish the new church. A notable Berean convert, Sopater, later became a companion to Paul and traveled to Asia with others from Macedonia (Acts 20:4).

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<sup>186</sup> Pella, located on the *Via Egnatia* to the west of Thessalonica, was the birthplace of Alexander III of Macedon [Alexander the Great], 356–323 BC.



Paul at Athens (c. 51)  
 The First Intellectual Confrontation  
 between Biblical Christianity and Greek Philosophy  
 [Acts 17:15–34]

The Sailing Trip to Athens

Departing from Berea and sailing south to Athens, Paul was entering the province of Achaia, the very heart of ancient, classical Greece. Silas and Timothy had remained behind to supervise the work of the newly planted churches. Paul was the focus of the hatred and attacks, and so had to leave alone. Paul himself desired once and again to return to the believers at Thessalonica—his heart was there—but he was hindered by spiritual forces and providential circumstances (1 Thess. 2:17–20; 3:1–11).

Paul would be at Athens alone for several weeks, perhaps a month or more, waiting word from Thessalonica, then receiving a report from Timothy and sending him back immediately.<sup>187</sup> He would also be greatly agitated and pained by the pagan idolatry and take every opportunity to evangelize, both in the synagogue and in the *agora*. The great, cumulative apologetic opportunity was his address to the Athenian philosophical council, the *Areopagus*.

Note: some great opportunities and ministries occur quite providentially. Athens was not the major city of the Province of Achaia—Corinth was the capital city, a commercial center, had a very large Jewish population and synagogue. Corinth would become an integral part of the Apostle's evangelistic purpose and thrust—but he was providentially driven from Thessalonica, left the *Via Egnatia*, which would have taken him to Rome (which he had long desired to see, Cf. Rom. 1:13; 15:22–29), and went aside to Berea. He now found himself at Athens in the

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<sup>187</sup> Paul was left alone at Athens by those who had conducted him there and then immediately returned to Berea with a command from Paul for Timothy and Silas to come to him at once. According to 1 Thess. 3:1–7, Timothy did come to Paul at Athens with word concerning the Thessalonians, then returned to them immediately. Evidently Silas was either sent with him to Thessalonica, or perhaps to Berea, to continue and strengthen the work in Macedonia.

providence of God. Now left alone for a time at Athens, he made the most of this providential opportunity.

The trip by sea was some 250 miles to the south–southeast and took several days. As he sailed to the south along the Gulf of Salonica, bound to the west by Macedonia and soon on the east by the great Isle of Euboea, he could see the high, snow clad peak of Mount Olympus receding to the west and stern of the vessel and Mount Athos fading far into the east. The ship would pass to the east of Thermopylae and its pass, where 300 Greeks stopped the Persian army of Xerxes in 480 BC.

Farther to the south was Marathon, where the Greeks had defeated the invading Persian army of Darius in 490 BC. Navigating the narrow Gulf of Euboea for some ninety miles, Paul traveled to Salamis, the island some ten miles off the coast of Athens and a nautical mile from Piraeus, the seaport of Athens.

The Harbor of Piraeus, an excellent, commodious, deep–water port, was connected to the city of Athens by a continuous fortification, known as the “Long Walls” for a distance of six miles. From Piraeus Paul could see the great Acropolis with its temples rising above the city, plainly visible from its busy harbor, and at the top the gigantic statue of *Minerva Promachus* with her shield and spear glistening in the sun—the tutelary divinity of Athens and Attica.

#### The History and Description of Athens

Athens was the intellectual center of the world, “the cradle of democracy, the eye of Greece, mother of arts and eloquence.” It manifested “all the glory of heathen antiquity.” “The highest level of culture attained in classical antiquity. The sculpture, literature and oratory of Athens have never been surpassed.”<sup>188</sup> It was the birthplace of science and philosophy, the native city of Socrates (469–399 BC) and Plato (c. 429–c. 347 BC), and the adopted home of Aristotle (384–322 BC), Epicurus (341–270 BC) and Zeno (c. 335–c. 263 BC). Ancient Athens largely determined the character of Western Civilization.

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<sup>188</sup> F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 348.

The Attic dialect, originally spoken in the immediate area around Athens, as compared to the widespread Doric or Ionic Greek, ultimately became the main basis for the Κοινή Greek later spoken throughout the empire. It was the language of the LXX and the Greek New Testament.

The glory days of Athens began to wane when the Athenians were defeated by the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC). Although it regained much of its importance, it was defeated once again by Philip of Macedon in 338 BC. It was permitted to enjoy much of its freedom until the Roman conquest in 146 BC.

Under Roman jurisdiction, Athens was considered a free, allied city–state in the empire, and enjoyed much liberty in its institutions. Augustus made it a free city with its own government and supreme council, the Areopagus.

The Athens which Paul observed in the middle of the first century AD was in the fading sunset of her former glory, which was in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. She was living in the past and on her once glorious reputation. Physically, Athens was a beautiful city filled with vineyards, gardens, trees and statuary, colonnades, temples, altars and beautiful buildings.

As one of the three great university cities of the ancient Greco–Roman world [Athens, Tarsus and Alexandria], and as the intellectual center of the Greco–Roman Era, the city, although having only 5,000 voting Greek citizens, attracted multitudes of philosophers, intellectuals, pseudo–intellectuals, charlatans, students and seekers from all over the empire. These believed that knowledge acquired was the only approach to truth, and so pursued knowledge for its own sake. The newest or latest was, perhaps, the best—or so it was thought (Acts 17:21).<sup>189</sup> From

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<sup>189</sup> Acts 17:21, Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ πάντες καὶ οἱ ἐπιδημοῦντες ξένοι εἰς οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἡνυκαίρουν ἢ λέγειν τι ἢ ἀκούειν τι καινότερον. For all the Athenians and visiting strangers spent their time in either telling or hearing “the newer thing,” i.e., the latest idea, theory, or speculation.

what Paul observed in his travels, at Athens and especially at Corinth, he later wrote Romans 1:18–32.

Paul's entrance into and view of Athens. From the seaport of Piraeus, which formed the entrance into the city, Paul would have seen the Acropolis with its temples rising far above all the other buildings. As he entered the city, he saw the statue of Minerva's rival, Neptune, seated on horseback, hurling his trident. He would pass the Temple of Ceres, indeed, the streets were lined with various sculptures: idols of and altars to the various gods.

To the right was the grand *Agora*, the city center, with its large plaza, the covered *stoa* or colonnades where the philosophers taught and debated, orators exhibited their abilities, statesmen met and argued, poets expressed their imagination and idle persons listened to and commented on various subjects. To the south was the *Phnyx*, a sloping hill partially leveled for public assemblies. To the east, the great Acropolis with its magnificent temples: the *Parthenon*, the *Propylaia*, the *Erechtheion* and the Temple of *Athena Nike*. Paul would daily come to the *Agora* and engage in personal evangelism.

Athens was the foremost idolatrous city in the Roman Empire. It was literally filled with altars and shrines—"full of idols." [κατείδωλον] (v. 16).<sup>190</sup> Xenophon, an Athenian Greek historian of the fourth century BC, stated that Athens was "all altar, all sacrifice and offering to the gods." Petronius, a first century Roman satirist, stated that that it was "easier to find a god than a man in Athens." Pausanias, a second century Greek traveler and geographer in his multi-volume work, *Description of Greece*, comments that Athens had more images than the rest of Greece put together.

Pliny the Younger wrote that in the first century, Athens had more than 30,000 public statues in addition to the many private

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<sup>190</sup> Acts 17:16, ...θεωροῦντος κατείδωλον οἶσαν τὴν πόλιν. pres. ptc., constantly observing that full of idols was the city. A *hapax legomenon* in both Greek Literature and the New Testament. Probably an idiom formed after κατάμπελος κάθυδρος ("full of idols").

ones.<sup>191</sup> The Athenians deified not only every “god” of the Greco–Roman imagination, but also abstractions and characteristics. Every human passion, infirmity and desire was deified. There were shrines and altars to such entities as “Shame,” “Pity,” “Modesty,” “Fame,” “Energy,” “Persuasion,” etc.,<sup>192</sup> and even some to “unknown gods” as recorded by ancient travelers and referred to by Paul himself (v. 23). This, then, was the Athens that Paul carefully and continually observed from a consistent Christian perspective (Acts 17:22–23).<sup>193</sup>

Note: Why is man inherently and necessarily religious and why, in his fallen condition, an idolator? Because he has been created in the image and likeness of God as a rational, morally–responsible being, created as a creature of faith to believe in God and to live in the context of his revealed Law–Word.

With the Fall came the noetic effects of sin, and thus fallen, sinful man both habitually suppresses the truth of God revealed through natural revelation and is also inexcusable for his refusal to acknowledge such (Rom. 1:18–20).<sup>194</sup> He perverts God’s reality, worshipping and serving the creature rather than the

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<sup>191</sup> A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, III, p. 278.

<sup>192</sup> R. C. H. Lenski, *Interpretation of the New Testament*, “Acts,” p. 708; Thomas Walker, *Acts*, p. 375; G. T. Stokes, “Acts,” *The Expositor’s Bible*, p. 475.

<sup>193</sup> There are classic works that shed much light on early Christianity and are well worth the time spent in their perusal. The serious student will find ample descriptions of Athens by both ancient and modern travelers, in the following: Augustus Neander, *The Planting and Training of the Christian Church by the Apostles*, pp. 186–188; Conybeare & Howson, *The Life and Labors of St. Paul*, pp. 264–287f; F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul*, pp. 295–307f; and William Ramsay, *St. Paul, The Traveller and the Roman Citizen*, pp. 237–249f.

<sup>194</sup> Rom. 1:18–20. “holding” is a pres. ptc, κατεχόντων, “habitually suppressing.” “without excuse,” ἀναπολογήτους, is lit: “without an apologetic, or defense.”

Creator (Rom. 1:25).<sup>195</sup> The results are social, intellectual, moral, religious and spiritual (Rom. 1:26–32).

Yet even as a fallen, sinful being, he remains a creature of faith—he *must* believe in someone or something external to himself. Turning from God, he worships the state as a totalitarian institution, national, military or religious leaders, material objects or invisible entities such as power, freedom, liberty, etc. He becomes increasingly immoral (Rom. 1:26ff), as there is a necessary Divine judgment upon humanity when it turns away from the truth of God. Athens was filled with phallic symbols and statues depicting immorality. Immorality thus has a theological basis. Turning from God and his truth necessarily carries a moral judgment.

The world of lost men, despite its pretended wisdom, advancement and science, is willfully bereft of a knowledge of the one true God and therefore of his truth (Rom. 1:18–22). The world of lost humanity remains epistemologically bankrupt and given to futility.

These circumstances bring us to the providential mission of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, during his sojourn at Athens. He was not and could never be a tourist or simply a sightseer. He was a Christian and an Apostle, sent to these very Gentiles.

Note: In Paul's day, these statues, shrines and altars represented "gods" to the people and were actually worshipped as such. This is no longer true, due to the widespread influence of Christianity in Western Civilization, but is it correct to view these ancient statues and altars simply as "works of art," or to understand the reality of the idolatry and spiritual blindness and perversion behind them?

*Behind all art, music, learning and philosophy, there is a theology—a certain concept of the absolute, of God.* "Art appreciation" without spiritual perception betrays an inconsistent or fragmented world—and—life view. The Christian sees behind the façade. We must ever seek to retain a truly consistent Christian perspective, as both ancient and modern man were

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<sup>195</sup> Rom. 1:25, οἵτινες μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν τῷ ψεύδει καὶ ἐσεβάσθησαν καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα, lit: These are such who have exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, i.e, willingly side-stepped God to worship His creation.

and are idolatrous. The true Christian can never be a mere casual observer, a tourist or sightseer.

### Paul's Evangelistic Imperative

[Acts 17:16–18]

“Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him...” (Ἐν δὲ ταῖς Ἀθήναις ἐκδεχομένου αὐτοῦ τοῦ Παύλου παρωξύνετο τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ). Gen. absol. and imperf. vb., emph. a constant or rather an increasing state of affairs. He was constantly awaiting word from Thessalonica and Berea through the arrival of Timothy and Silas, and also became increasingly provoked or “was becoming indignant, agitated, roused to anger, sharply and inwardly pained” (παρωξύνετο)<sup>196</sup> as he “continued to carefully view” (παρωξύνετο...θεωροῦντι, pres. ptc.) the intensity of pagan idolatry in Athens “when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry” (κατείδωλον [emph. pos.] οὐσαν [pres. ptc. approaching the substance of an emph. periphrastic] τὴν πόλιν). Lit: “full of idols.” Intens. use of κατά...

Note: The relation of the deity to the idol. An image or idol was not the “god” itself, but merely a symbol or representation of the given “deity.” This explains the often crude features or fine sculpture of the idol.

The worship of the image was a means to power. What was the significance of the idol or image? As a religious object or representation, it was the vehicle for contact with the given “god,” an avenue through which to gain its power through manipulation (sorcery,<sup>197</sup> incantation, sacrifice, etc.).

Each visible symbol or image was meant to portray a given characteristic or attribute (Acts 14:11). Paul marked the spiritual deception and reality of idolatry—they unwittingly worshipped demons (1 Cor. 10:20). Idolatry has a definite spiritual character.

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<sup>196</sup> παρωξύνετο, imperf. a medical term for a sharp pain, to be roused to anger. Cf. Eng. “paroxysm,” a sudden onset or increase in certain symptoms of a disease. The idolatry at Athens increasingly and inwardly pained him.

<sup>197</sup> Magic is the manipulation of supernatural forces through natural means, hence the alleged need for physical elements such as idols, images, fetishes, potions, etc. These are considered as avenues to power, prophecy or protection.

Is it correct to state that Paul was instinctively provoked and filled with abhorrence as a monotheistic Jew in the context of the Decalogue and its prohibition of idolatry when he beheld the idolatrous nature of Athens? No. He was provoked as a Christian. He kept to his mission and continued his synagogue ministry to the Jews and proselytes on the Sabbaths and evangelized in the Agora daily during the week (Acts 17:16–17).<sup>198</sup>

There is no record of Jewish opposition at Athens, or record of converts, so his ministry may have been received with some indifference. The daily personal evangelism also seemed to be largely received with indifference by the intellectuals and philosophers.

Paul continued to have encounters with the Stoics and Epicureans, the two current philosophies taught at Athens.<sup>199</sup> Stoicism was founded by Zeno in Athens (c. 300 BC). The essence of this system was a life lived by reason, viewing living by reason as virtue and living otherwise as evil. Thus, it held to the alleged virtue of reason over emotion and sought a life of bravery and indifference to pain, pleasure and death. Stoicism was pantheistic in its view of the Divine as a world–spirit [λόγος principle]<sup>200</sup> that animated all things, and was fatalistic with regard to events. As Epicureanism had an attraction for the Greek mind, Stoicism had an attraction for the Roman mind and spirit. It fostered a philosophical pride and bred a coldness of spirit.

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<sup>198</sup> Acts 17:17, κατὰ πᾶσαν ἡμέραν. The addition of πᾶσαν stresses that this was Paul's daily activity without fail—the Eng. idiom would be “each and every day.” He was earnestly and faithfully there. πρὸς τοὺς παρατυγχάνοντας, to meet with the ones who happened to be there, i.e., those who frequented the agora for the purpose of discussing or debating various philosophical and religious ideas (Cf. v. 21).

<sup>199</sup> Acts 17:18, ...συνέβαλλον αὐτῷ, καί τινες ἔλεγον... “were continually encountering him and certain were repeatedly saying...” Both vbs. are imperf.

<sup>200</sup> Such thinking about the λόγος characterized early Gnosticism, and so John was inspired to begin the prologue to his Gospel record with a dissertation of our Lord as the eternal, personal, Divine λόγος in 1:1–3, 14, 18.



The Epicurean school of thought was founded by Epicurus of Athens (341–270 BC). He taught that pleasure was the chief end of life, and therefore held that men should seek to be free from pain, and removed from disturbing passions, ambitions and troubling superstitions. Life was to be lived in tranquility as much as possible.

This philosophy was practically atheistic and thus materialistic and atomistic [the world was formed by a gratuitous concourse of atoms, not created]. It denied any afterlife after physical death. The “gods” lived in eternal calm, completely separated from the turbulent world of men. Later Epicureanism became a refuge for some with hedonistic and sensualist tendencies. Epicureanism was the philosophy of pleasure and gratification; Stoicism that of duty and pride.

Both philosophies were antagonistic to Christianity and the truth of God, creation, providence, the immortality of the soul, sin, redemption, the resurrection and eternal life.

...the Stoic was the idealist; the Epicurean the utilitarian. The Stoic was the stern dogmatist, the unflinching man of duty; the Epicurean the practical, common-sense man of the world, the philosopher who could make the best out of circumstances. The Stoic was deeply interested in the doctrine of God and the soul; the Epicurean indulged in the dilettante skepticism of the man of culture. To stretch a comparison—the Epicureans were the Sadducees, the Stoics the Pharisees of Hellenism.<sup>201</sup>

These encounters were brought to culmination through Paul’s gospel message and the ignorant, polytheistic presuppositions of the philosophers (v. 18). “And some said, What will this babblers say?” (Τί ἂν θέλοι ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος λέγειν;). Literally, “What would this ‘babbler’ say, if he really had anything to say?” ἂν with the opt. mood (4<sup>th</sup> cl. Cond. implying the negative).

Note: ὁ σπερμολόγος οὗτος. The term σπερμολόγος was originally used of a bird that hopped about and picked up seeds here and there, often out of manure. Later, of one who frequented the agora and picked up pieces of discarded scraps and sold them, and then used for pseudo-philosophers,

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<sup>201</sup> R. B. Rackham, *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 305.

eclectics, ignorant plagiarists, mere collectors of words, re-thinkers of borrowed sayings, who gathered scrapes of thought in a second-handed way from various religious and philosophical systems and patched them together in a haphazard way—an “intellectual scavenger.”

This implies both the utter contempt of these philosophers and their utter inability to put the elements of Paul’s message together.

“Other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods...” (οἱ δέ, Ξένων δαιμονίων δοκεῖ καταγγελεὺς εἶναι), cf. emph. pos. One who seemed to preach or declare foreign minor deities or secondary gods, “because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection.” (ὅτι τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ τὴν ἀνάστασιν εὐηγγελίζετο). Cf. emph. pos. He seemed to be preaching “a male god” (τὸν Ἰησοῦν) and “a female goddess” (τὴν ἀνάστασιν). “Jesus” is masc., and “resurrection” feminine, or even possibly “healing” and “restoration.”<sup>202</sup> It is noticeable, however, that they did acknowledge his zeal (καταγγελεὺς, to declare with authority).

These philosophers, who considered themselves and were probably considered by others to be intelligent men could make no sense of Paul’s gospel preaching because of their polytheistic presuppositions. An unregenerate intellect presents a barrier; spiritual illumination opens God’s truth.

They physically took hold of Paul [ἐπιλαβόμενοι, v. 19] and brought him before the *Areopagus*, the Athenian Supreme Council of Twelve which sat in judgment upon any new religious or philosophical teaching. Whether this was on Mars Hill, the Council’s original meeting place, or in the *Agora*, is not known.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Cf. F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 351, footnote 21, quoting F. H. Chase, who suggests that these may have associated Ἰησοῦς with ἱασις, “healing” and Ἰησῶ, the goddess of health. This is a distinct possibility in the context of such terms as σωτηρία and σωτήρ (salvation and Savior, denoting restoration to health). Ἀναστάσια might refer to restoration.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Acts 17:22, Σταθεὶς δὲ ὁ Παῦλος ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου πάγου... “having taken his stand” in the midst of the Areopagus implies the gathering of the council, not necessarily the location.

Four centuries previously, Socrates was brought before the *Areopagus*, condemned for teaching new gods, and forced to drink the poison hemlock. This was evidently not a formal trial, but an informal hearing to clarify Paul's teaching. In addition to the Council of Twelve was a multitude of listeners and onlookers.

### The Athenian Address: The *Areopagitica*

Paul's address before the *Areopagus* is the classic biblical, apologetic encounter between biblical faith and human reason. He presented Christianity as a World-and-Life View. It ought to be thoroughly studied and digested, as we are all commanded to intelligently defend the faith (1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3; 2 Cor. 10:3–5).

This address was the culmination of several weeks of daily gospel preaching in the agora (v. 18). This clearly explains the omission of our Lord by name, the work of the cross and the mention of saving faith. Paul's purpose was simply to put the preaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and the truth of the resurrection in their proper theological and historical context—and this he did in about five minutes. Every word was weighty and to the point.

Paul took a presuppositional approach, reasoning entirely from within the Christian system. He declared the truth of God, and did not acknowledge any “brute facts” or seek any so-called “neutral ground” between Christian theism and natural reason. Indeed, he and his hearers did not agree on any of his major assertions. Neither did he argue from the “first principles” of the philosophers.<sup>204</sup>

Although Paul never quoted Scripture as he would in the synagogue to those whose religion was steeped in their Scriptures, each statement in this address was, in fact, a summary of biblical truth derived from the Word of God.

Paul referred to the ignorance of his hearers and quoted from their own pagan poets to demonstrate that even fallen human beings still retain a sufficient sense of the Divine nature to be

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<sup>204</sup> See “The Excursus and Polemic on Apologetics: Paul at His Best” at the conclusion of this section.

wholly responsible and culpable for their sinful suppression and idolatrous perversion of the truth (Rom. 2:14–16).

The following is an analysis of Paul's address or the *Areopagitica*. The underlying Old Testament Scriptures which formed his presuppositions are added in brackets.

# I

## The Introduction: Man and His Innate Sense of The Divine (v. 22–23)

Paul addressed the Athenian Court in a courteous and proper manner, and took for his text an ancient inscription from one of their altars, “To an Unknown God.” This became his “text” or both his point-of-contact and point-of-departure for his address.

“Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ hill...” Σταθείς, aor. ptc., “having taken his stand,” referring to his assuming the posture of an orator [his left hand on his lapel and his right hand extended] (Cf. σταθείς in Lk. 18:11; Acts 26:1; 27:21). ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ Ἀρείου Πάγου, i.e., in the midst of the *Areopagus* or Supreme Court of Athens.

The location could well have been on Mar’s Hill, where all about him he could have gestured toward the various prominent temples and shrines. The members of the Court along with prominent observers could have crowded about and upon the rocky outcropping. The scene was awesome and dramatic. This was the most profound statement ever uttered in Athens.

“...and said, *Ye* men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are extremely religious.” Ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, “Men, Athenians!” The usual formal address used by the Athenian orators. κατὰ πάντα ὥς δεισιδαιμονεστέρους ὑμᾶς θεωρῶ. “In all things you are very religious, or more religious than most.” The phrase is both emph. by pos. and ambiguous in nature. Note in Acts 25:19, where Festus uses the same term to Agrippa II in a positive, inoffensive way. “But [the Sanhedrin] had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.” Paul would not have wanted to alienate them at the outset by a derogatory remark. θεωρῶ, “I perceive (through continued careful

observation or examination).” Paul wanted them to know that he did not speak from ignorance or prejudice.

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, ‘TO AN UNKNOWN GOD’.” διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν “For as I was passing through and continually and carefully investigating<sup>205</sup> the objects of your worship [def. art., temples, shrines, idols]. εἶρον καὶ βωμὸν. Used only of pagan altars and only here in the New Testament. ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο. “On which had been inscribed” (pluperf., pointing, perhaps, to its ancient existence, and so a long-standing witness). Ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. “To an unknown god.” There were altars to such unknown deities in several localities in Greek cities, and some in Athens, as attested by ancient writers.

“What therefore ye ignorantly worship, this declare I unto you.” ὃ οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν. The neut. reference (ὅτοῦτο, “what...this...”) is a general reference to a deity or the Divine nature, not the personal God, i.e., they were not worshipping the true God in an ignorant manner. Paul personalizes the identity and nature of God in his following declaration, when he uses the def. art. and the masc. gender. ὃ...τοῦτο ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν, implying a personal, authoritative knowledge and declaration of what they were ignorantly worshipping.

[O.T. refs: Gen. 1:1; Psa. 19:1–6; Isa. 45:15–25; Jer. 10:25]

## II

### A Declaration concerning The One True God (v. 24–25)

Paul contrasted a true and right concept of the one true God with their ignorance and misunderstanding of Deity. He declared God as Creator, Sovereign Lord, Providential Governor and Sustainer of the universe.

“God that made the world (ὁ θεὸς ὁ ποιήσας τὸν κόσμον) and all things therein (καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ).” The def. art. points to God the Father as the personal, one, true God. The rest.

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<sup>205</sup> διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν... εἶρον...pres. ptcs, aor. vb.

att. emphatically points to God as Creator. κόσμος is the ordered universe. πάντα τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ excludes nothing.

Every fact in the universe is a created fact, defined and determined by God. “Seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth” (οὗτος οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς ὑπάρχων κύριος. οὐρανοῦ καὶ γῆς emph. pos. ὑπάρχων, eternally subsisting as κύριος sovereign Lord. A declaration of his absolute sovereignty and providential sustenance of all creation.

“Dwelleth not in temples made with hands.” (οὐκ ἐν χειροποιήτοις ναοῖς κατοικεῖ).<sup>206</sup> A culminative emph. God is omnipresent and immanent. He cannot be confined or limited in any way. “Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing” (οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται προσδεόμενός τινος). God is absolute and independent. οὐδὲ ὑπὸ χειρῶν ἀνθρωπίνων θεραπεύεται is service that is necessary or useful. Source of our Eng. “therapeutic.”<sup>207</sup>

God needs no one. Nothing.<sup>208</sup> “Seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (αὐτὸς διδοὺς πᾶσι ζωὴν καὶ πνοὴν καὶ τὰ πάντα. αὐτὸς διδοὺς “He himself (emph.) gives...” God is an intensely personal God and providential governor.

[O.T. refs: Gen. 1:1; Ex. 20:11; 1 Kgs. 8:27–30; Isa. 66:1–2]

### III

#### The Relationship of God to The Human Race (v. 26–28)

Paul declared the Divine creation and unity of the human race, as opposed to the Greek claims of racial superiority and Athenian claims of innate indigenous superiority. He declared the absolute sovereignty of God over and the Divine purpose for

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<sup>206</sup> Plutarch (*Moralia* 1034B): “It is Zeno’s teaching that one should not build temples of the gods.” Euripides (968, quoted by Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* 6.25) “What house fashioned by builders can contain the divine form within enclosing walls?” Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “Acts,” *Anchor Bible Commentary*, p. 608.

<sup>207</sup> One preacher commented that “Paul’s God did not need therapy.”

<sup>208</sup> Euripides (*Hercules Furens* 1345–46): “For God, if indeed God he is, is in need of nothing.” *Ibid.*

human history—that men might seek God. He portrayed fallen man as blindly groping after the God who in reality is omnipresent and immanent.

“...and hath made of one blood all nations of men” (ἐποίησέν τε ἐξ ἑνὸς πᾶν ἔθνος ἀνθρώπων). “And” (τε) a part. which construes this statement closely to the preceding. “Blood” (αἷματος) omitted from some texts. Paul declared the Divine creation and unity of the human race. This equalized Greeks and Barbarians, Athenians and all others.<sup>209</sup> A common Creator and a common source, as opposed to evolution, to chance and to polytheism.

“for to dwell on all the face of the earth” (κατοικεῖν...ζητεῖν, v. 26–27, two pres. telic inf. denoting purpose). The purpose of God in locating and situating each nation is that men might be spread throughout the inhabitable portions of the earth for the purpose of fulfilling the creation mandate to subdue the earth and rule it wisely under God (κατοικεῖν ἐπὶ παντὸς προσώπου τῆς γῆς), and also see God’s hand in history and therefore seek him.

“and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation [in order] that they should seek the Lord” (ὀρίσας προστεταγμένους καιροὺς<sup>210</sup> καὶ τὰς ὁροθεσίας τῆς κατοικίας αὐτῶν ζητεῖν τὸν θεόν). God ordained [pre-ordained, as this appointment was purposed before men were created] the rise and decline of each nation or succeeding civilization. The sense can be both geographical and historical.

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<sup>209</sup> The Athenians thought themselves ἀυτόχθονες, or indigenous, i.e., inherently native, aboriginal, and so, superior even to the other Greeks.

<sup>210</sup> Two Gk. terms for “time”: Χρόνος, a space or period of time (Hence, Eng. “Chronology”), and καιρός, a due proportion, measure, fixed period, season. Thus, the seasons of rise and decline.

Both are to be included in this statement.<sup>211</sup>

“If haply they might feel after him, and find him” (εἰ ἄρα γε ψηλαφήσειαν αὐτὸν καὶ εὔροιεν). Opt. mood, 4<sup>th</sup> cl. cond. sent.<sup>212</sup>

The thought is not that the purpose or intention of God was vague and unrealized, but that the depravity and sinfulness of man [noetic effects of sin] had so perverted man that, although surrounded by the witness of creation to the Creator, he incorrectly interpreted the truth of this witness. Man is here portrayed as groping in the semi-darkness of natural revelation for a deity that actually surrounds him.<sup>213</sup>

“Though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being” (καί γε οὐ μακρὰν ἀπὸ ἐνὸς ἐκάστου ἡμῶν ὑπάρχοντα. Ἐν αὐτῷ γὰρ ζῶμεν καὶ κινούμεθα καὶ ἐσμέν). The statement uses the emph. part. (γε) and also uses the stronger neg. (οὐ rather than μὴ). “Be” (ὑπάρχοντα), exists or subsists in his fullness. This statement is a *Litotes* to emph. the Divine immanence.<sup>214</sup> The being, life and general activity of mankind occurs in the context of a sovereign and determining God.

“As certain also of your own poets have said, for we are also his offspring.” (ὥς καὶ τινες τῶν καθ’ ὑμᾶς ποιητῶν εἰρήκασιν, Τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γένος ἐσμέν). Paul used the plural, revealing his acquaintance with several Greek poets whose words were

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<sup>211</sup> “In assigning to the nations their respective abodes, he had fixed both the seasons of their prosperity and the limits of their territory—i.e., it was he who decided when and how long they should flourish and how far their dominion should extend.” H. B. Hackett, *Acts*, p. 207.

<sup>212</sup> Grammatically, there are four classes of conditions in the New Testament Greek, which are categorized according to their relation to reality: reality, unreality, probability and possibility.

<sup>213</sup> This mental inability as a result of the Fall is referred to as the noetic effects of sin, from νοέω, to think. Cf. Rom. 1:18–22.

<sup>214</sup> *Litotes* (λιτότης), *Meiosis* (μείωσις), a belittling or understating of one thing to emphasize or magnify another.



parallel.<sup>215</sup> “Offspring” in the sense of being created in the image and likeness of God, not in a redemptive relationship.

Paul here quoted three Greek poets. He did so, not to find common ground, or to gain the favor of the Greeks, but to impress the Athenians that even the pagans knew enough concerning the Divine nature to be responsible to God and culpable before him.

They fashioned a tomb for thee, O holy and high one—  
The Cretians, always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies!  
But thou art not dead; thou livest and abidest for ever;  
For in thee we live and move and have our being.<sup>216</sup>  
Let us begin with Zeus—  
Never, O men, let us leave him unmentioned  
All ways are full of Zeus...  
In every direction we all have to do with Zeus  
for we are also his offspring.<sup>217</sup>

We add to these the amazing parallels the words of Cleanthes in his “Hymn to Zeus”:

For we are Thy offspring, taking the image only of Thy  
voice,  
as many mortal things as live and move upon the earth.  
Therefore I will hymn Thee, and sing Thy might forever.  
For Thee doth all this universe that circles round the earth  
obey,  
moving whithersoever Thou leadest, and is gladly swayed by  
Thee....  
Nor is aught done on the earth without Thee, O God,  
nor in the divine sphere of the heavens, not in the sea...

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<sup>215</sup> Paul quoted or referred to Epimenides (Acts 17:29 and Titus 1:12), Menander (1 Cor. 15:33), Aratus and Cleanthes. F. W. Farrar recognized at least fifty specimens of Greek rhetorical expressions in the writings and addresses of Paul. See Phillip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 291.

<sup>216</sup> Epimenides the Cretian (6<sup>th</sup> century BC?). The second line is also quoted in Titus 1:12.

<sup>217</sup> Aratus the Cilician (c. 270 BC).

But Thou, O Zeus, the All-giver, Dweller in the darkness of cloud,  
 Lord of thunder, save Thou men from their unhappy folly,  
 Which do Thou, O Father, scatter from their souls;  
 and give them [to] discover the wisdom,  
 in whose assurance Thou governest all things with justice;  
 So that being honored, they may pay Thee honor,  
 Hymning Thy works continually, as it beseems a mortal man.  
 Since there can be no greater glory for men or gods than this,  
 Duly to praise forever the Universal Law.<sup>218</sup>

The words of Seneca, the Roman philosopher, statesman, dramatist and contemporary of the Apostle Paul (Seneca lived 4 BC–65 AD), whom Paul may have heard, or who may have heard Paul. These words do reveal the innate knowledge even fallen man possesses concerning God:

The whole world is the temple of the immortal gods...Temples are not to be built to God of stones piled on high; he must be consecrated in the heart of each man.... God wants not ministers. How so? He himself ministereth to the human race. He is at hand everywhere and to all men..... God is near thee: he is with thee; he is within....Thou shalt not form Him of silver and gold: a true likeness of God cannot be moulded of this material.<sup>219</sup>

[O.T. refs: Gen. 1:1, 14, 28–29; 2:7; Deut. 32:8; Psalms 50:9–13; Isa. 42:5; Dan. 2:36–45]

#### IV

#### The Conclusion:

#### Repentance because of Certain Judgment (v. 29–31)

Because man is made in the image of the Divine, he is not to think that the Divine can be truly represented by wood, metal or marble engraved from human imagination. God previously overlooked such perversion, but now commands everyone everywhere to repent and turn to the true God. God has appointed

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<sup>218</sup> Cleanthes (263–232 BC), successor to Zeno the Stoic.

<sup>219</sup> Seneca, as quoted by J. B. Lightfoot, *Philippians*, p. 290.

his Man as judge, and has assured this appointed judgment by raising this Man from the dead.

Paul then came to the crux of the matter—the declaration of the essence of the Gospel—and the historico-redemptive context for “Jesus” and the “resurrection.” Because man is made in the image of God, he is not to think that the Divine nature can be truly represented by wood, silver, gold or marble engraved from human imagination. God previously overlooked such perversion and debasement, but now (because the truth of the gospel is now historic fact to be proclaimed, Gal. 4:4–5; 3:13; Rom. 1:3–4), commands everyone everywhere to repent and turn to the one true God. God has appointed his “Representative Man” as judge, and has assured an appointed Day of Judgment by raising this “Man” from the dead.

“Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead [Divine nature] is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.” “Forasmuch then” (οὖν) introduces the conclusion and application. γένος οὖν ὑπάρχοντες τοῦ θεοῦ. emphasized the state of mankind as created and subsisting in the image of God.

Paul argues from Christian presuppositions. οὐκ ὀφείλομεν νομίζειν, must not think, obligated not to think that the Divine [nature] (τὸ θεῖον, neut., cf. v. 23) can be properly or adequately represented (εἶναι ὅμοιον) by graven (χαράγματι) materials produced by the technique and imagination of man (τέχνης καὶ ἐνθυμήσεως ἀνθρώπου). Man’s imagination has been greatly perverted by the Fall (Rom. 1:21–25), and what truth he does perceive, he constantly stifles or suppresses (Rom. 1:18).<sup>220</sup>

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commands all men every where to repent” (τοὺς μὲν οὖν χρόνους τῆς ἀγνοίας ὑπεριδὼν ὁ θεός, τὰ νῦν παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντα πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν). A contrast of time between the pre-gospel era and as things are now—based on the progressive revelation of God in redemptive history. The establishment of the Gospel as historic fact and reality, and the

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<sup>220</sup> “Holding,” κατεχόντων (pres. ptc., constantly suppress).

publication of the gospel throughout the world of mankind have, with all finality, left men without excuse.<sup>221</sup> During the former era God overlooked (ὑπεριδὼν, aor. temporal ptc., subserv. to the pres. vb. παραγγέλλει) such perversion and deprecation, i.e., God did not cut off the heathen, idolatrous nations in Divine judgment.

But now that the Gospel is fulfilled and proclaimed, ὁ θεός, παραγγέλλει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις πάντας πανταχοῦ μετανοεῖν. παραγγέλλει...μετανοεῖν (pres. imp. and pres. inf.), a positive, inclusive and perpetual command. Evangelical repentance includes turning from sin (including all religious error and idolatry), and turning to worship the one true God according to his Word, which necessarily implies faith in Christ. Cf. Gal. 4:4–5; Rom. 3:21–26. The cross of Christ is the focal-point of history.

“Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” καθότι ἔστησεν ἡμέραν ἐν ᾗ μέλλει κρίνειν τὴν οἰκουμένην. God has set (predetermined) a Day of Judgment for the whole human race. μέλλει κρίνειν possesses the meaning of absolute certain or impending judgment.

He has also ordained His Man to sit as Judge (ἐν δικαιοσύνῃ ἐν ἀνδρὶ ᾧ ὥρισεν). The assurance of this is the resurrection of this Man from among the dead (πίστιν παρασχὼν πᾶσιν ἀναστήσας αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν). Πίστιν, the usual term for “faith” is here “proof, assurance, evidence.” Paul does not seek to prove the resurrection, but asserts it as evidence of future, final judgment. Paul argued wholly from within Christianity as a system, i.e., he was thoroughly biblical and Christian in his approach as a consistent presuppositionalist.

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<sup>221</sup> Note this thought and truth in Gal. 4:4–5 and in the “But now” of Rom. 3:21; 16:25–26; 1 Cor. 15:19–22; Gal. 4:8–9; Eph. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9–10; Heb. 8:4–6; 9:24–26; 12:18–29; 1 Pet. 2:10.

[O.T. refs: Gen. 1:26–27; Ex. 4:22–23; Psa. 9:8; 96:13; 98:9; 115:4–8; 135:15; Isa. 2:12; 40:18–20; 41:5–7, 29; 44:9–20; Jer. 1:16; 2:26–28; 10:2–5; Dan. 7:13–14; Hos. 11:1; Amos 3:1–2; 5:18]

### The Reaction and Results: An Evaluation

The reaction was varied: some scoffed and jeered, some procrastinated and some received the message—a reaction which could have occurred under most circumstances. The issue: was Paul’s approach and message a failure? Some hold that he sought to play the philosopher and failed miserably, thus, when arriving at Corinth, he was determined to stay with the gospel and never again play the philosopher (1 Cor. 2:1–5).<sup>222</sup>

Paul’s weakness and trembling at Corinth and the wickedness of the city might have proven to be the most unsavory ground for the gospel, but God gave him a vision of encouragement (Acts 18:9–10). This had no relation to Athens, but to the wickedness of Corinth and evident Jewish antagonism. Corinth may have been more intimidating than Athens due to its exceeding wickedness. Athenian indifference might have been trying and disappointing, but never intimidating.

### Excursus: A Polemic on Apologetics: Paul at His Best

Because some past scholars have asserted that the Apostle sought to “play the philosopher” and failed at Athens, the issue of a biblical template for Apologetics must be discussed.

Apologetics<sup>223</sup> is the department of Theology which attempts to defend the faith against non-Christian systems and religions in an intelligent manner. Polemics<sup>224</sup> is the department of Theology

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<sup>222</sup> Those who hold that Paul failed before the *Areopagus* include J. Stalker, F. W. Farrar, J. Eadie, R. B. Rackham, B. H. Carroll and M. Tenney. For the opposite view, see F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, p. 325, J. B. Polhill, *Acts*, p. 379; and R. C. H. Lenski, *Acts*, pp. 739–741. Also consult the writers of Presuppositional Apologetics in the Bibliography.

<sup>223</sup> Apologetics, from the Gk. ἀπό, “from,” and λέγω or λεγείν, to “speak,” and so to speak from a given position so as to defend it.

<sup>224</sup> Polemics, from the Gk. πολέμικος, “war-like,” and so to engage in argumentation.

which argues for one view against another within the Christian system. E.g., to intelligently defend the Virgin Birth and Deity of our Lord against atheism, or creation against evolution, is to engage in Apologetics. To intelligently defend believer's baptism against infant sprinkling is to engage in Polemics. To defend Presuppositional Apologetics as opposed to Evidential Apologetics is to engage in Polemics.

There have been and are two opposing approaches to defending the faith: Evidentialism and Presuppositionalism. Evidentialism was the prevalent approach during the era when the detractors assumed the Apostle's alleged failure. Presuppositionalism views the Apostle's approach as thoroughly scriptural and consistent.

Evidentialism argues *to* the Scriptures, Presuppositionalism argues *from* the Scriptures, i.e., Evidentialism begins with various evidences gathered from history, science, archeology, natural theology, philosophy, etc. Evidentialism is thus characterized by the Latin *Intelligo et credo* ("I understand and I believe"). In principle, it differs little from outright humanism, in that it assumes there are "brute facts" which remain neutral or uninterpreted, and faith is subordinated to reason—in the case of the unregenerate mind, a spiritually impaired reason that is unable to grasp spiritual truth or habitually suppresses it.<sup>225</sup>

Evidential Apologetics: the most essential, vital issue, is that if one seeks to credential or prove the Bible, then he necessarily holds that the evidence he appeals to possesses more validity and authority than the Scriptures themselves. He necessarily denies the self-authenticating nature of Scripture, and so unwittingly dishonors the Word of God. Only when the self-attesting nature of Scripture is presupposed and the Scriptures declared with authority is the Word of God properly honored.

This is the issue: the evidentialist does not sufficiently confront unregenerate individuals, who by nature are *not* truthful,

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<sup>225</sup> See pp. 135–136, 146 for the terms used to describe the unregenerate mentality.

ethical or honest. They are depraved by nature,<sup>226</sup> at enmity against God, have exchanged the truth of God for the lie, have by-passed the Creator to worship creation, and are satanically blinded to the truth of the Gospel. They cannot savingly come to spiritual truth, and are constantly suppressing what truth they do know in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18–32; 8:7–8; 1 Cor. 2:14; Eph. 4:17–19).

Evidentialism is necessarily the apologetic approach of Arminianism and Pelagianism. Among its adherents, however, are also some [inconsistent] Calvinists, who hold to what they affirm is “Traditional” or “Classical” Apologetics. They appeal to “natural theology” or general revelation (God revealed in creation, and thus to reason, science, history, etc.) as sufficient (Rom. 1:18–20). But the presuppositionalist would argue that without the correction of Scripture [special revelation], man at best is left to [an alleged] “neutrality” in his survey of the “evidence,” and is not fully confronted with the truth. The evidentialist would object that such an approach is too biased and inadequate. The deciding issue is, however, “What saith the Scripture?”

Presuppositional Apologetics: this approach holds that saving faith and repentance are the gifts of God, freely and sovereignly bestowed. Cf. Eph. 2:4–10; Acts 11:18. Further, the presuppositional approach holds that all facts are created facts (Gen. 1:1) and that there are no “brute facts” or “neutral ground” on which both sides may agree. Apologetics must reason or argue at the presuppositional level, as the conflict is not over a few isolated facts and their interpretation, but a conflict between two opposing world-and-life views. It is the unbeliever’s entire system of thought—his assumptions, presuppositions or belief-system—that must be approached with a view to pointing out his inconsistencies and contradictions.

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<sup>226</sup> See Rom. 1:21, ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν καὶ ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά. “...futile in their reasonings and darkened became their incapacitated hearts”—a description of the noetic effects of sin.

Presuppositionalism is characterized by the Latin *Credo ut intelligam* (“I believe in order that I may understand”). This coincides with the scriptural order of Heb. 11:1–3 (Πίστει νοοῦμεν... i.e., “Through faith we understand...”). Scripture gives the priority to faith. This is not to say that faith is irrational. It is an intelligent faith because: (1) It derives from the self-disclosing, triune God of Scripture—the God of absolute wisdom and infinite intelligence, and (2) It rests itself [by the enabling grace of God] in the Scriptures, which are the intelligent, non-contradictory, self-attesting, authoritative revelation of the one true God.

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Thus, we hold that this was not Paul at his worst, but Paul at his best—and “no sermon which wins souls is a failure.” He was simply being “all things to all men that by all means he might save some” (1 Cor. 9:19–22). What other Apostle could have stood before the *Areopagus*? He was consistent in every way. The indifference and opposition was to be expected from any crowd, Jewish or Gentile, and especially from the educated, university and philosophical crowd. Paul was the one man who could have so clearly presented the truth as a Christian world-and-life view, do so with such an economy of words and yet be clearly understood.

Again, if this were Paul’s great failure, why did Luke take such pains to later carefully interview Paul and record it so fully and exactly? He gives only a sketch of Paul’s eighteen months and more at Corinth (Acts 18:11) and little more of Paul’s three years at Ephesus (Acts 19:10; 20:31), except for the unusual miracles (Acts 19:11–20) and the great mob gathered by the silversmiths when their trade was threatened (Acts 19:23–41). And Luke passes by almost a year of travel in strategic locations in 3 verses (Acts 20:1–3). He typically deals in depth with those incidents which are of the utmost importance—and he did so in detailing the Athenian address.

Finally, if this becomes the most graphic and workable example of and template for biblical, Presuppositional Apologetics, why should it be considered such a failure? Would



the result be any different if someone addressed an educated, philosophically-minded group today concerning the Christian Theistic World-and-Life View in language they could understand?

“Some clave to him,” including one of the Council of Twelve, Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris and others, implying several believers (v. 32). Was there not the nucleus for a church here? Would these not have been baptized? The final results are in God’s hands, but the faithful preaching of the gospel for weeks and this final magisterial address were magnificent in the very stronghold of human philosophy. The most profound words ever uttered in Athens were not spoken by Socrates, Plato or Aristotle, or any other legendary Greek philosopher, but by a converted Jewish rabbi—the inspired Apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul at Corinth (c. 52–53)

[Acts 18:1–18]

#### The Location and History of Corinth

Leaving Athens, Paul either took ship or traveled by land to the southwest fifty miles to Corinth. The overland route was approximately 37 miles, the sea route, about 50 miles and a five-hour sailing journey. Corinth was the largest city in Greece and the most important city in Achaia, a Roman *Colonia* and the seat of the Roman Proconsul of Achaia.

Corinth was located strategically at a very narrow isthmus some three and a half miles wide which separated the commerce and shipping between the Aegean and Adriatic Seas and the Peloponnesian Peninsula from the rest of Greece. It was the great commercial and cultural center where East and West met. Corinth was the center of virtually all trade between Rome and Asia. To sail around the cape of the peninsula [Malea] was extremely dangerous, thus almost all commerce went through Corinth.

Note: The Sicilian Sea was avoided as much as possible by ancient mariners. Two famous Greek proverbs stated: “Let him who sails around Malea forget his home” and “Before sailing around Malea, make your will.” Robert Reymond, *Paul: Missionary Theologian*, p. 165. Also see Farrar, *Op. cit.*, II, p.

555, footnote 2 and Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, p. 323, footnote 5.

The isthmus itself was fortified and in Roman times had 150 guard towers. A road [δίολκος] of both stone and lumber connected the two ports, Cenchrea to the east and Lechaeum to the west. Carts carried the shipments of goods between the two. Small vessels were actually pulled across on the wooden tracks. This isthmus was called “The Bridge of the Sea” and “The Gate of the Peloponnesus.” Corinth was aptly called “The City of The Two Seas.”

The Corinth of Paul’s day was a relatively new city; ancient Corinth, which existed from c. 3,000 BC had been completely razed to the ground by the Roman General Lucius Mummius in 146 BC after a coordinated Greek rebellion. He killed all the men and sold the women and children into slavery.

It lay in ruins for a century until rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC as *Colonia Julia* [*Laus Juli Corinthus*], seeing its strategic military and commercial significance and location. He peopled it with military veterans and freed men. It quickly assumed a dominant position as the commercial center of Greece, a city of sailors and their vices from all over the Mediterranean world, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians and Jews.

Behind the city rose the huge, Rocky *Acrocorinthus*,<sup>227</sup> with its temple to Aphrodite, the citadel of the city and center for the worship of the Greek goddess of love, sex, pleasure and procreation.<sup>228</sup> It is said that a thousand cultic prostitutes served her in this temple and in the city. The immorality of Corinth was so proverbial that its very name implied immorality in all its types. “To Corinthianize” [Κορινθιανίζω] meant sexual

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<sup>227</sup> The Acro-corinthus rose to almost 2,000 feet elevation, and served as the city’s military fortress or citadel, with an adequate water supply fed by internal springs.

<sup>228</sup> The mythical goddess Aphrodite, although married to Hephaeteus, the god of fire, had many sexual liaisons with other lovers. In both myth and reality, Corinth was steeped in immorality as the accepted norm.

debauchery. A “Corinthian girl” was synonymous with a prostitute.

The great Isthmian Games, second only to the Olympic Games, were held on alternate years in honor of Poseidon, the god of the sea. These games attracted great numbers of athletes, contestants and visitors.<sup>229</sup> There were also temples to other gods: Apollo, the god of music, health and healing; Hermes, the messenger of the gods [Roman name: Mercury]; Asklepios, god of medicine and doctors; and Hygeia, the goddess of health [Roman name: *Salus*]<sup>229</sup>—an admixture of pagan religious pluralism pointing to entertainment and the arts of healing.

Corinth, by virtue of its location, cosmopolitan character, religious paganism, cultic prostitution, agreeable climate, availability of goods from all over the empire and beyond, was the place for visitors, orators, philosophers, charlatans, adventurers, merchants and prostitutes of both sexes. These met to trade, relax, satiate themselves with sensual indulgence and pleasure and seek healing at the various temples—an ancient resort city proverbial for its immorality.

Corinth and Pompeii were the two most openly wicked cities in the empire, even by pagan standards. Pompeii was completely destroyed by a heavy rain of volcanic ash in 79 AD from an eruption of Mount Vesuvius, leaving only Corinth, perhaps providentially preserved by the entrance of the gospel and establishment of a Christian church.

Here Paul providentially arrived, alone, armed with the truth of the gospel, far removed from his original plans and desire to return to Thessalonica or move toward Rome. At Corinth the power of the gospel to transform lives by the grace of God would

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<sup>229</sup> Did Paul observe any of the games and athletic contests? Perhaps, as he made spiritual application to fighters, wrestlers, runners (1 Cor. 9:24–27; Eph. 6:12; Phil. 3:13–14) and to athletics in general (1 Tim. 2:5; 4:7–9; 2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 12:1–2). Examples also exist from his travels by sea, using nautical terms (e.g., Heb. 6:19–20) and also used military terminology (Eph. 6:10ff; 1 Tim. 2:3–4) and terminology from agriculture (1 Cor. 9:11; 15:42–44; 2 Tim. 2:6) and other varied subjects.

be manifest, and a large congregation was converted and gathered. This, in spite of the Jews, paganism and the tendency of the church to reflect the society from which it had been spiritually extracted and in which it necessarily resided.<sup>230</sup>

The converts were mostly of the lower classes, a few from the higher classes (Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:17–31), some converted Jews (Acts 18:8), and included former cultic prostitutes, homosexual prostitutes (1 Cor. 6:9–11),<sup>231</sup> merchants and tradesmen. The many problems of the Corinthian church should not surprise the reader; such issues were resultant from the background of the converts. The miracle of grace is that God gathered a true, believing, functioning church in such a wicked, pagan place as Corinth!

#### Aquila and Priscilla

[Acts 18:1–3, 18–19, 26; Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19]

Here Paul met and formed a close, life-long friendship with Aquila and Priscilla. This Jewish couple had to leave Rome with the Emperor's ban on Jews, and were already Christians. Paul worked with them, as they were of the same trade: "tent makers," meaning workers in cloth, leather, clothing and coverings. They helped form the nucleus of the church and after almost two years at Corinth, left for Ephesus with Paul. They later returned to Rome, but eventually settled once again at Ephesus.

#### The Synagogue Ministry and Jewish Opposition

[Acts 18:4–6]

Paul resumed his customary (Acts 17:2–3; Rom. 1:16) synagogue ministry at Corinth with unusually blessed results. Justus, a converted proselyte, provided a place for worship next

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<sup>230</sup> The various issues of a sexual nature, several social, marital and legal problems, exhortations and divisions and controversies over spiritual gifts are detailed in the two letters written to the Corinthian church by Paul. The first letter, now lost (1 Cor. 5:9), dealt, at least in part, with immorality and relationships.

<sup>231</sup> "Effeminate" [μαλακοί] refers to passive, homosexual prostitutes; "abusers of themselves with mankind" [ἀρσενοκοῖται] refers to aggressive homosexuals. Paul used the common terms for such.

to the synagogue, and Crispus, the leading rabbi of the synagogue, and his household were converted. When Timothy and Silas came from Macedonia, they evidently brought financial aid to Paul and he was able to give himself to evangelism full-time. This effort brought about a crisis with the Jewish opposition. Paul symbolically shook the dust from his clothing and turned to the Gentiles.

#### The Encouraging Vision and Subsequent Ministry

[Acts 18:7–11, 18]

At this point, as he faced not only the antagonism of the Jews, but the paganism and wickedness of Corinth, he received a vision of the glorified Lord in the night to give him the utmost encouragement with the promise that no man would harm him, and that He had many to be converted at Corinth.<sup>232</sup> Paul's comfort was in the power of God and the predicted success of the gospel—Divine predestination (2 Tim. 2:8–10).

This was the beginning of a useful, fruitful ministry at Corinth for eighteen months. His stay, then, was close to two years at Corinth. Luke simply passes over this time with but few remarks. It is evident that Paul evangelized the surrounding territory, which included Lechaenum and Cenchrea (Rom. 16:1–2). Much about this history may be gathered from the two Corinthian Epistles, including Paul's reference to various miracles or signs which God did through him to credential his apostleship at Corinth (2 Cor. 12:11–12).

Paul writes the Epistles of 1 & 2 Thessalonians  
from Corinth (c. 52–53)<sup>233</sup>

During Paul's stay at Corinth, he wrote and sent by Timothy two letters to the church at Thessalonica. The issues treated in these letters reveal the trials of this church and its great testimony.

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<sup>232</sup> Acts 18:9–10. Note the tenses used: pres. imp. of prohibition [Μὴ φοβου], pres. vb. [λάλει] and the aor. subj. [μὴ σιωπήσης]: "Stop being afraid and keep on speaking out and do not even begin to be silent!"

<sup>233</sup> See pp. 337ff.

These two epistles were written c. 50–51 during Paul's second missionary journey from Corinth within a few months of leaving Thessalonica (I Thess. 3:1–7; Acts 18:5). As in the Epistles of James and Galatians, there is mention of the opposition of the Jews against Christianity. These two epistles are the earliest compendium of Christian truth, covering both doctrinal and practical matters.

### The Proconsul Gallio and Paul's Detractors

[Acts 18:8–17]

The Jews, were evidently kept at bay for a considerable time, used the arrival of the Proconsul Gallio to instigate an uprising, intending to charge Paul with heretical teaching contrary to the Mosaic Law and traditional Judaism. Their charge was based on the status of Judaism as a *religio licita*, a legal religion recognized by the empire. Gallio viewed Christianity as a sect within Judaism, and so refused to sit in judgment in favor of the Jews against Paul, holding that the issue concerned things within the Jewish religion and not matters of legal importance for Roman law. He drove them from his judgment seat.

The anti-Semitism among the Greeks came to the fore and they took Sosthenes,<sup>234</sup> the new leading rabbi, and beat him before the Proconsul, who took no legal notice of this action. This action—or rather inaction—had significant consequences for Christians at Corinth and evidently gave them some relief from Jewish antagonism and persecution.

Note: Gallio was Proconsul for two to three years, the average length of time for such a post (c. 52–54). His original name was Annaeus Novatus, the brother of Annaeus Seneca, the Roman philosopher. He had been adopted into the family of Junius Gallio the Rhetorician. He was known as a man of honor and equity who “won universal regard by his amiable temper and popular manners.”

Because of his discernment that this was a religious issue among Jews and not a matter for Roman law, he dismissed the case. Paul was neither charged nor forced to appeal to the

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<sup>234</sup> Sosthenes was a common Greek name, but it may be that he was later converted, as Crispus before him, and became a companion to Paul (1 Cor. 1:1).

Emperor, as was the case later with Festus (Acts 25:7–12, 24–27; 26:31–32).

After remaining at Corinth awhile longer [certain days], Paul left Corinth for Ephesus, across the Aegean Sea in the province of Asia, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him. He had taken a vow and shaved his head,<sup>235</sup> minded to return to Jerusalem for the fourth time (Acts 18:18). He was able to separate his Jewishness in taking a vow and shaving his head from his faithfulness to the universality and doctrine of the gospel.

Paul at Ephesus (c. 53)

[Acts 18:18–21]

The sailing trip from Cenchrea to Ephesus usually took thirteen to fifteen days, winding through the various Islands in that part of the Aegean Sea. Ephesus was the major city of Asia Minor, a great metropolis and meeting place for the East and West and for the East and the orient. It was a sacred city, the center of the worship of the Greek goddess Artemis, the Roman Diana, goddess of the hunt, the moon and of birthing. Her worship and the numerous pilgrims who attended her worship created a large industry in graven images. A full description must wait for Paul's return during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1–20:1).

There was a large Jewish population and a synagogue at Ephesus. Paul dialogued with the Jews for a short time, but had to leave to reach Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost.<sup>236</sup> He promised to return as and if God willed it. He left Aquila and Priscilla there and took a ship to Caesarea on the central Judean coast.

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<sup>235</sup> This was akin to a Nazarite vow (Numb. 6:1–21), which began with letting the hair grow, then shaving it off when the vow was completed. But Paul did not offer any animal sacrifices at the Jerusalem Temple. He separated his Jewishness from his Christianity.

<sup>236</sup> Although the feast remains unnamed, the Feast of Passover was usually too early in the sailing season and the Feast of *Yom Kippur* or Atonement was too late, and travel would be dangerous. Most Jews sought to make their yearly pilgrimage at Pentecost.

The coast of Israel had no natural harbor. Caesarea was an artificial harbor built by Herod the Great. Caesarea at this time was the military capital of Judea and the official residence of the Roman Procurator, Felix. The usual shipping route would bring him to the islands of Samos, Cos, Cnidus, to the south of Rhodes, south of Cyprus and finally to Caesarea, a journey of several weeks. Luke's account of this entire trip, including his short stay at Jerusalem, is extremely brief.

#### Paul's Fourth Trip to Jerusalem and Antioch (53)

[Acts 18:21–22]

This would be Paul's fourth trip to Jerusalem. It was evidently short and he encountered nothing contentious or noteworthy. After meeting with the church, he left once again for Antioch in Syria, and probably went by land, visiting the various churches along the way to Syria. There, among some of his closest and enduring brethren, he would spend some time before retracing his steps on his third missionary journey. Unknown to him and them, it was to be his last visit to his sending church.

Note: By this time, the center of Christianity in its predominantly Gentile character and missionary outreach had moved from Jerusalem to Antioch. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, it would be centered in Ephesus and the guiding personality would be John the beloved Disciple and only living Apostle.

#### Paul's Third Missionary Journey (c. 53–57)

[Acts 18:23–21:15]

##### Summary of the Third Missionary Journey

The time-frame: c. 52–57 AD. Miles traveled: approximately 2,700 miles, with other possible short or side-trips. This journey may be considered in four stages.

Stage one: from Antioch to Ephesus (Acts 18:22–23; 19:1). Following the Roman road, Paul and his companions traveled through the Cilician Gates to Tarsus, then to Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Anitoch in Pisidia, then on to Ephesus, taking the route through Upper Phrygia.

Stage two: Paul spent three years at Ephesus (Acts 19:1–20:1, 31) with a short trip to Corinth (2 Cor. 12:14; 13:1). While at Ephesus he wrote the first two Corinthian letters.



Stage three: Paul and his companions traveled through Macedonia, where he wrote 2 Corinthians, then to Greece, spending three months at Corinth, where he wrote the letter to the Romans. They retraced their steps back through Macedonia because of a Jewish plot, then crossed the Aegean Sea to Troas (Acts 20:1–5).

Stage four: From Troas to Jerusalem (Acts 20:5–21:15), with notable stops at Assos, Miletus, Tyre, Ptolemais and Caesarea.

The First Stage of the Third Missionary Journey:  
Cilicia, Galatia and Phrygia  
[Acts 18:23]

Luke, the author of Acts, gives very little information concerning the first stage of Paul's third journey. Silas is not mentioned on this trip, so it is assumed that he stayed in Jerusalem, where he had previously been a leader. Timothy was with him and probably others, including Titus. By the usual land route the group would have crossed Cilicia through the Cilician Gates of the Taurus range and Paul would visit his birthplace for the final time.

Reaching the high plateau and following the major Roman road, they re-visited the various cities where they had previously labored and planted churches. At Lystra, Timothy would see his birthplace and family for the last time. From the Pisidian Antioch to Ephesus, they could have taken two routes.

Some believe that at this juncture they followed the region of the Meander River Valley, which would have taken them to Colossae, Laodicea and the other cities of Asia Minor mentioned in Rev. 2:8–3:22, but Paul, in his Colossian Epistle, wrote that they had never seen him personally (Col. 2:1).<sup>237</sup> It is most probable that they stayed on the major route through Upper Phrygia which led to Ephesus.

Interlude: The Ministry of Apollos  
[Acts 18:24–28]

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<sup>237</sup> He probably later visited this region between his Roman imprisonments. Philemon lived at Colossae (Phlm. 22). See pp. 207–208, 385–386.

There were evidently two factions in Judaism which continued to exist in the early decades of Christianity following the passion of our Lord and Pentecost: the Judaizers, who never truly departed from Judaism and taught that Gentiles must become Jews before they could become Christians, making circumcision necessary to salvation and treating Gentile believers as mere “proselytes of the gate” (Acts 15:1ff).

There was evidently a second group which had followed John the Baptist, but were ignorant of the ministry, passion and resurrection of our Lord, the “Great Commission” and Pentecost. These were preaching a defective gospel of a yet coming Messiah and Redeemer. One of these was Apollos, who hailed from Alexandria in Egypt, had evidently been schooled in rhetoric and was a gifted, powerful and convincing preacher. This demonstrates that a gifted man may be convincing but have a false or defective message.

When Apollos began preaching in the Ephesian Synagogue, Aquila and Priscilla took him and taught him the full truth of the gospel of the person and redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Having then been instructed in the truth of the Lord Jesus and the fullness of the gospel, he left and went to Achaia, evidently settling for a time at Corinth, where he exercised a significant ministry (Acts 18:24–28; 1 Cor. 1:12; 3:4–6, 22; 4:6; Tit. 3:13). He may have been with Paul as a helper later at Ephesus (1 Cor. 16:12).

Note: The reference to John’s baptism, described here as an incomplete baptism, has caused some to posit that the baptism of John the Baptist was not Christian baptism. In answer to this, the following should be considered: first, John baptized only repentant adults, i.e., converts.

Second, it was the only baptism that our Lord and the Apostles ever received. Did they lack Christian baptism?

Third, The ministry of John was unique; he had no successors. No one else had the authority to perpetuate his baptism.

Fourth, Apollos and others were promulgating a partial gospel, but had never personally heard John the Baptist preach, as every message recorded of John mentions the Holy Spirit, of whom the disciples of Apollos were wholly ignorant. Theirs was a

second-hand, though fervent message, and one filled with inadequacies.

It was the inadequate message received which invalidated the baptism. Christian baptism is emblematic of the believer's identification in the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus (Rom. 6:3–6). The baptism is invalid if not performed with reference to His name and redemptive work.

Note: Acts 19:1–7 has been used to promote a second work of grace, evidenced by the gift of tongues. The literal reading is, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”<sup>238</sup> Further, the question concerning baptism is nonsensical unless baptism was in the name of the triune God (Matt. 28:19–20). Finally, not every incident of baptism was accompanied with the phenomenon of tongues. The manifestation of tongues at Ephesus was a testimony to the fullness of the gospel in the person and work of the Lord Jesus. At the house of Cornelius, it was a testimony that God accepted the uncircumcised Gentiles as true believers.

### The Second Stage of the Third Missionary Journey: Ephesus [Acts 19:1–20:1]

#### The Importance, Location and History of Ephesus

Ephesus was the largest, most important and wealthiest city of Asia Minor. It was also the center of worship for the goddess Artemis [the Roman goddess Diana], who was worshipped throughout the Mediterranean world. This would become a most significant place, where Paul would minister for three years. As he had experienced great gospel blessing at Corinth, despite its wickedness and perversion, so he would experience great gospel blessing at Ephesus, despite its being the center of wicked, pagan worship, the occult and magical arts.

The city of Ephesus was ideally situated at the crossroads of the major routes from East to West and North to South—it was the hub of commerce for Asia Minor, lying in the Caÿster River valley and located on two opposing hills some three miles from

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<sup>238</sup> Acts 19:2, εἰ πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐλάβετε πιστεύσαντες; the aor. vb. and temporal aor. ptc. point to an event occurring simultaneously with the verbal action, i.e., “when ye believed,” not “since.”

the sea and harbor. At this juncture in history Ephesus had a population of some 250,000.

As the gateway to the Orient,<sup>239</sup> it was a mixture of Greek and Oriental cultures, peoples, religions and pagan superstition. The harbor, though partially silted, was one of the centers of sea trade for ancient Ionia. Gospel evangelism here would eventually reach throughout all the province of Asia (Acts 19:10).

Ephesus was founded by the Ionians in 1100 BC. In 133 BC, Attulus II bequeathed the city to Rome. It was the capital of the Proconsular Province of Asia. It was a free city and also a sanctuary city, and thus a gathering place for the lowest of society, criminals, outcasts and the scum of humanity. Its immorality rivaled that of Corinth, and one writer stated that her inhabitants “had morals worst than beasts.” There were public baths, a gymnasium and a great amphitheater which would seat close to 25,000.

#### The Religious Character of Ephesus

Ephesus was a city of gods and goddesses. Ornate temples were erected for the worship of Sarapis and Isis of Egypt, Apollo, Aeskulapius, Athena, Concord, Cybele, Dionysius, Enedra, Hecate, Hephaestus, Hercules, Nemesis, Pan, Pluto, Poiseidon and Zeus.<sup>240</sup>

Two great religious festivals were held yearly, one in early spring and the other in May in honor of Artemis, the patroness deity of the city. The latter festival was called *Artemision*, and was the sponsor of the Pan-Ionian Games. As this was a religio-cultural event which lasted an entire month, pilgrims and athletes came from all over the Mediterranean world. Ephesus was a very proud city, and public fervor ran high at such events (e.g., Acts 19:27–34).

The main temple, dedicated to Artemis, had been destroyed repeatedly and rebuild on an ever-larger scale. Its dimensions

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<sup>239</sup> The Orient in terms of the Greco-Roman Era was Persia and the countries which would be described as the Middle East.

<sup>240</sup> Robert L. Reymond, *Paul Missionary Theologian*, p. 179.

were 425 feet in length and 220 feet wide. 127 massive marble pillars, sixty feet in height supported the roof. The inside and outside of the temple were richly decorated with gold, paintings and esoteric symbols.

The image of Artemis was that of a many-breasted goddess, the nurturer of Asia, more Oriental than Greek.<sup>241</sup> The idol may have been formed from a meteorite.<sup>242</sup> The goddess was served by priests who were eunuchs, by a variety of virgin priestesses called *melissae*,<sup>243</sup> and a multitude of temple-slaves called *neocoroi*.<sup>244</sup> All of the Ephesians themselves were devoted to her as her *neocoroi*, or temple-slaves.

The intense pride and jealousy of the Ephesians over this temple and their goddess can be noted when Alexander the Great desired to help pay for the rebuilding of the temple if his name could be inscribed upon one of its walls. They refused the greatest of the Greek generals and kings—such was their jealousy for their goddess!

This temple was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world, and the Ephesians were extremely jealous of both the goddess and her religious influence throughout the Roman Empire.<sup>245</sup> In addition, through the various offerings and the sanctity of the temple in the eyes of the population and pilgrims, this edifice became the largest bank and deposit for wealth in all of Asia.

Several industries grew up in connection with the worship of Artemis and the occult or magical arts, most notably the

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<sup>241</sup> The Greek Artemis had little resemblance to the Roman Diana, who was portrayed as beautiful and graceful, the goddess of the hunt.

<sup>242</sup> The tradition that the goddess fell down from Jupiter was part of this legend (Acts 19:35–36).

<sup>243</sup> Gk. for “bees,” akin to melissa, honeycomb (Lk. 24:42).

<sup>244</sup> *Neocoros*, lit: “temple sweeper,” then a slave or fanatical devotee.

<sup>245</sup> There were thirty-three shrines to Artemis in various parts of the empire. Ephesus, however, was the great center of Artemis worship.

manufacture of silver images of the goddess. The craftsmen became wealthy, as such images were in demand by pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire. Paul's ministry evidently caused a great decrease in their demand, which occasioned the riot instigated by Demetrius, one of the silversmiths (Acts 19:21–41).

Ephesus was also a great center for the occult.<sup>246</sup> Soothsayers, astrologists, sorcerers, charlatans and exorcists abounded. Jewish exorcists were particularly prevalent with their incantations and use of biblical and extra-biblical texts<sup>247</sup> and names. Their attempted use of the name of "Jesus" and "Paul," and their subsequent beating by the demon-possessed man resulted in a spiritual awakening in which many, even among believers, brought their occult scrolls and burned them (Acts 19:14–20).

#### The Ministry of Paul at Ephesus

Into this morass of pagan idolatry, superstition, the occult and immorality came the Apostle Paul with the truth of the gospel. He immediately began to build upon his first short stay (Acts 18:19–21) and continued his ministry in the synagogue. This ministry had to be substantial, as it lasted three months before a crisis was reached and Paul had to leave the synagogue and take up his preaching and teaching in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9–10).

The school of Tyrannus<sup>248</sup> evidently had a large lecture hall, and Paul rented this during the middle of the day when it would otherwise be closed due to the midday heat. This provided a public hearing for the gospel when the inhabitants and travelers

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<sup>246</sup> For a thorough discussion of the practice of the magical arts at Ephesus, see Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians: Power and Magic*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992. 244 pp.

<sup>247</sup> Some incantations were taken from the Apocrypha books, which lent themselves to such legends and traditions.

<sup>248</sup> Tyrannus is Lat. for "Tyrant." Some have suggested that this was the students' nickname for their master.

were lounging in the midday heat. This arrangement went on for over two years.

Thus, from Ephesus the gospel was proclaimed throughout all the province of Asia through those who traveled through Ephesus and heard the Apostle—a blessed providence. The seven churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 2:1–3:22) may have had their planting from this ministry.

During Paul's three year ministry at Ephesus, he began the practice of sending others with letters to the various churches to establish communications and correct faults when necessary. At times, deputations from his former ministry would seek him out. Persons and events during his Ephesian ministry: Titus sent to Corinth (2 Cor. 8:6; 12:18), Timothy and Erastus sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:21–22), messengers arrived from the house of Chloe at Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11ff), Stephanus, Fortunatus and Achaïus arrived from Corinth (1 Cor. 16:17–18).

During this time, the Lord worked unusual miracles through Paul (Acts 19:11–12). Sweat bands, rags and work aprons which he had used were taken to the sick and they recovered, to the demon-possessed, and they were exorcised. Such unusual miracles, performed without the presence of Paul, revealed the infinite superiority of the Gospel over the magical arts of the occultists and exorcists.

Jewish exorcists were common throughout the Diaspora, known for using biblical and apocryphal texts and names in their attempts to exorcise demons. The seven sons of Sceva thought to add “Jesus” and “Paul” to their list of names. The demon spoke through the man and said, “Jesus I have knowledge of and Paul I am acquainted with, but you! Who are you?!”<sup>249</sup> The demon-possessed man then violently attacked them and they fled from his house stripped of their clothing and severely wounded.

The result and reaction was city-wide when it became known (Acts 19:17–20). The inhabitants were filled with terror.

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<sup>249</sup> Acts 19:15, Τὸν Ἰησοῦν γινώσκω καὶ τὸν Παῦλον ἐπίσταμαι ὑμεῖς δὲ τίνες ἐστέ.

This was a great inadvertent testimony to Paul and his gospel message. Many believers, who still had some of the old ways, charms and occult practices confessed their sins and wrongs and gave up their scrolls containing incantations. Others who were involved in such practices with their scrolls of incantations and formulae of magic arts held a large, public book burning. The value of the scrolls was 50,000 silver *drachmas*.<sup>250</sup>

After this public book burning, Paul voiced his intention and perhaps the leading of the Spirit to end his ministry at Ephesus, go through Macedonia, return to Jerusalem and then go on to Rome (Acts 19:21–22). Thus, he sent Timothy and Erastus before him, while he remained at Ephesus to bid farewell to the church.

The gospel Paul preached was making great inroads into the population of Ephesus and evidently among the pilgrims and travelers who came to the city. Demetrius the silversmith voiced the fear of many that the entire industry of making images of their goddess was in jeopardy. The cause was financial, clothed with the respectability of religion (Acts 19:23–41).

The ensuing riot was most likely raised during the sacred month of May when the city was crowded with pilgrims and spectators. Thousands gathered in the great amphitheater as the instigators congregated in a massive show of force. Many were simply carried away with the emotions and excitement of the moment (Acts 19:32).

Those assembled, believing that their religion and trade were threatened, became furious and cried out, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!”<sup>251</sup> Their rage was almost uncontrollable. Two of Paul’s companions, Gaius and Aristarchus, were seized and dragged into the amphitheater. Paul himself sought to also go, but the *Asiarchs* [chief officials] restrained him.

The Jews took this opportunity to make a stand against Paul, put forth Alexander to speak, but the mob, finding Alexander to

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<sup>250</sup> Some concept may be grasped of the enormous amount, as one *drachma* was a day’s wage in that era.

<sup>251</sup> Acts 19:28, καὶ γινόμενοι πλήρεις θυμοῦ ἔκραζον λέγοντες· μεγάλη ἡ Ἄρτεμις Ἐφεσίων.



be a Jew, cried out for two hours, “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!” The city recorder took charge and quieted the mob, appealed to their beliefs and common assumptions concerning Artemis, and then warned them of the possible consequences of the uproar from the government authorities. He then declared that the law was open for any complaint.

Having quieted the huge mob, he dismissed them. After the uproar, Paul was determined to leave for Macedonia and so took leave of the brethren and departed after three years of faithful, fruitful ministry (Acts 20:31).

Paul writes Two Epistles to the Corinthians from Ephesus<sup>252</sup>  
[1 Cor. 5:9; 16:8; 2 Cor. 13:1]

During his Ephesian ministry, Paul wrote two letters to the church at Corinth. The first of these has been lost (1 Cor. 5:9). The preserved letter reveals the issues and trials of a large Christian assembly formed out of and remaining in such a wicked place as Corinth. The church suffered divisions due to personality–worship; immorality and unruliness were constant issues, the principles of true Christian marriage had to be settled, proper behavior at church meetings had to be inculcated, the relative activities of men and women had to be regulated and the exercise of spiritual gifts had to be brought under control.

A church has to remain separate from society, yet exist within that society, and the church at Corinth had more than its share of challenges. The letter we know as 2 Corinthians was written later from Macedonia once Paul received the report from Titus, whom he had sent with the second letter, the 1 Corinthians of our New Testament canon.

The Third Stage of the Third Missionary Journey:  
Macedonia and Greece  
[Acts 20:1–6]

The opening verses of Acts chapter 20 cover several months of Paul’s journeys from Asia to Macedonia south to Achaia [Greece], then back through Macedonia and across to Troas, yet

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<sup>252</sup> See pp. 265ff.

are passed over in only three verses. To gain adequate information it is necessary to go to Paul's letters to shed light on this time.

Paul's intention was to go throughout Macedonia and Achaia to strengthen the churches, encourage the believers and take up the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, a project which had taken many months (Gal. 2:9–10; Rom. 15:25–27; 1 Cor. 16:1–4; 2 Cor. 8:1–22).

His determined purpose was to seek a final reconciliation between the Jewish church in Jerusalem and the churches of the Gentiles established under his ministry. This was evidently the motive behind the necessary trip to Jerusalem at one of the feasts before his long-awaited trip to Rome and even on to Spain (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:15; 15:23–24, 28–29).

Note: When he did arrive at Jerusalem with the collection and representatives of the Gentile churches founded during his ministry, the leaders, after a momentary greeting and thanksgiving for his ministry, seemed to shrug off this great effort and kindness, boasting of their Jewish culture, and wanting him to accommodate their Mosaic leanings by accompanying four men to the Temple and paying for their vows (Acts 21:17–24), an expensive process.

To end Jewish misunderstanding. He accommodated them, as he could separate his Jewish culture from the truth of the gospel. The Jerusalem church stands as a caution to churches which are racial, cultural and national in character. Such realities can easily be contrary to the acceptance, inclusivism and brotherly love of the gospel toward all believers.

Because of a plot by the Jews to murder him (Acts 20:3), Paul went back through Macedonia from Corinth, rather than sail across to Syria and on to Caesarea by sea. From Macedonia he sailed across to Troas, where he met up with his traveling companions (Acts 20:4–6).<sup>253</sup>

Note: Paul's companions on his trip to Jerusalem to present the collection from the Gentile churches represented every major

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<sup>253</sup> The sailing voyage from Neapolis to Troas took five days because of the contrary, prevalent southerly winds. From Troas to Neapolis would take only two days (Acts 16:11–12).

area where he had evangelized during these missionary journeys: from Galatia, Gaius from Derbe, Timotheus from Lystra; from Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus; from Macedonia, Sopater from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica; from the Syrian Antioch, Luke.<sup>254</sup> The only area not represented was Achaia.

Returning to the itinerary: Paul traveled from Ephesus to Troas and waited there, expecting to meet Titus who was to give him a report from Corinth and the reaction to his second letter [1 Corinthians]. He was anxious about the reception of his second letter and continuing problems in the church. Not finding him, Paul tarried at Troas for some time before embarking for Macedonia and preached the gospel (2 Cor. 2:12–13). Evidently a church was planted at Troas, for it is mentioned on Paul's return trip (Acts 20:5–12).

While in Macedonia, probably at Philippi, Titus arrived with good news concerning the Corinthian church, which was a great comfort to the Apostle (2 Cor. 7:5–16). There were still problems from a small minority, possibly those influenced by the Judaizers, as the final letter reveals, questioning Paul's apostolic authority, demeaning him (2 Cor. 10:10) and boasting that they had the proper credentials (2 Cor. 11:4–12:21). Paul then wrote the final letter, 2 Corinthians, and sent it by Titus to prepare for his intended visit (2 Cor. 13:1ff).

From Macedonia, Paul traveled along the Via Egnatia to the west to Illyricum (Rom. 15:18–20). In Rom. 15:19, the part. μέχρι, is indefinite. Paul may or may not have entered into the region of Illyricum; he may only have come to its border, but a later reference to Dalmatia suggests that Paul preached in both regions.

Some hold that he reached Dyrrachium on the Adriatic coast and also preached to the south in Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10). For three months he settled at Corinth at the house of Gaius (Rom.

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<sup>254</sup> Luke had evidently remained at Philippi and pastored the church. The "we" section begins once again in Acts 20:5 and continues to the end of Acts.

16:22–23). Here, considering his age and physical condition, the uncertainty of the future, and need for a full, systematic statement of his gospel, he dictated his *magnum opus*, the Epistle to the Romans, the most masterful, inclusive and systematic statement of the Christian religion ever penned.<sup>255</sup>

Note: Paul was now close to sixty years of age, worn and suffering physically from his “thorn in the flesh,” years of suffering, and the various inflictions from both Jews and Romans (2 Cor. 11:23–28). He had miraculously lived twice the average life-span of that day. Life expectancy in the Roman Era was 20–30 years. Note that in the year 1900, the average lifespan worldwide was only about 31 years due to the complete lack of modern medicine with its technology, antibiotics, etc. In 2014, life expectancy was 71.5 years.

Paul writes the Epistles of 2 Corinthians<sup>256</sup> and Romans

As noted above, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians, his third letter to the Corinthian church, in Macedonia and Romans at Corinth while staying at the house of Gaius and anticipating his future journey to Rome after his trip to Jerusalem. For some time, the expansion of the ministry and the care of the churches necessitated sending out his helpers to deliver his letters and get reports from the various churches. In addition to the dangers and sufferings he experienced, this was a constant burden and cause for much prayer for the Apostle—“the care of all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:23–28).

Because of the discovery of a plot by the Jews to murder him, he returned from Achaia through Macedonia, spent the Passover time at Philippi, and then sailed across to Troas to meet his traveling companions. He remained there for a week, preaching in the newly-planted church and fellowshiping with the brethren (Acts 20:6ff).

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<sup>255</sup> Romans remains Paul's *magnum opus*. Its compass is masterful. Ephesians remains the most profound. These two epistles form the heart and core of biblical Christianity. See Romans in section 5, pp. 237ff.

<sup>256</sup> See pp. 276ff.

The Fourth and Final Stage of the Third Missionary Journey:  
From Troas to Jerusalem

[Acts 20:6–21:17]

Seven days were spent at the port city of Troas (Acts 20:4–7), where the traveling party came together, the others having sailed across from Cenchrea to Ephesus and then north to Troas. While there on the first day of the week<sup>257</sup> Paul preached until midnight, bringing his ministry to a finality, ready to leave the next morning.

Eutychus, a young man, fell asleep in the third story and fell to his death. Paul rushed to him and fell upon him, as Elijah had fallen upon the lad he raised to life (1 Kgs. 17:21). He revived, and was restored to life, to the great comfort and joy of the congregation (Acts 20:7–10). Then Paul, his companions and the congregation “broke bread”<sup>258</sup> the next morning and Paul’s party departed.

Note: Apart from the dead bodies of the saints who went into Jerusalem after our Lord’s resurrection and appeared to many (Matt. 27:52–53), there are seven instances recorded in Scripture in which a dead person was raised to life again: the dead boy raised to life by Elijah (1 Kgs. 17:17–24), the dead person who touched the bones of Elisha (2 Kgs. 13:20–21), The three raised by our Lord: the widow of Nain’s son (Lk. 7:11–17), Jairus’ daughter (Mk. 5:22–24, 35–43) and Lazarus (Jn. 11:14, 38–45). Peter raised Tabitha (Acts 9:36–42) and Paul raised Eutychus (Acts 20:7–12).

As the sailing trip around the coast took longer than the direct road, which was a distance of forty miles, Paul left his company and went on foot, to meet them again at the port of Assos (Acts 20:13–14). Evidently, Paul wanted to be alone, to think and pray about the coming events at Jerusalem. There had

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<sup>257</sup> This reveals that Christians met on the first day of the week, the day of our Lord’s resurrection, and were not bound by the Jewish Sabbath (Matt. 28:1; Mk. 16:2; Lk. 24:1; Jn. 20:1; 1 Cor. 16:2).

<sup>258</sup> “Break bread” could refer to the Lord’s Supper or to a common meal, as the formula applies to both (Lk. 24:35; Acts 2:42, 45; 20:7, 11; 1 Cor. 10:16). This would be the one exception to the ordinance being observed by only the local assembly.

already been some indications or prophecies that he would suffer bonds and imprisonment there (Acts 20:22–25), although Luke does not reveal when, where or how they had been revealed to Paul.

From Assos, sailing south along the Ionian coast, the ship passed through the narrows to Mitylene. Evidently, due to the prevailing winds, they did not sail during the night calm, but during each day. From Mitylene, they passed through the narrows at Chios, then south to the island of Samos and the port of Trogylium to Miletus.

From there, Paul sent for the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:14–17). The distance was about seventy miles, so some days were lost. Paul had carefully determined the sailing time (Acts 20:16) and had some time to spare as he was desirous to be at Jerusalem by the Feast of Pentecost, the most opportune time to present the collection on behalf of the Gentiles churches.

The stay at Miletus probably took several days, as word had to be taken to the elders and they had to travel to Miletus a distance of seventy miles. The meeting itself may have taken only one day (Acts 20:18–38). His conversational address to them is the only example in Acts of Paul speaking to a Christian group.

Is there a discernable structure to this address? It was not formal, but there seems to be an insight into Paul's thinking and concerns. The scene was charged with passion and various issues were stated, Paul using himself as an example of faithfulness to admonish these elders whom he knew and loved. In v. 18–21, he reminded them of his past labors among them: his trials, tears and faithfulness to the gospel ministry.

Then he spoke concerning the present (v. 22–24), emphasizing his being bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem, the impending imprisonment and possibly worse which awaited him, and his resolute determination to be faithful unto death to the cause of Christ.

He then came to the present and made his statement concerning faithfulness to his ministry (v. 25–27). He then

admonished these elders and prepared them for their own future trials, urging them to be faithful (v. 28–32).

Once again, perhaps remembering what had been said against him by some at Corinth, he revealed his heart and zeal in a practical sense (v. 33–35). Having revealed his heart, faithfulness and determination, and having warned them, using himself as an example, he prayed with them and there followed an emotional final parting (v. 36–38). Paul's humanness revealed itself to those whom he loved and had labored with for those three years.

From Miletus, Paul and his companions sailed south to the island of Cos [Κῶς] and the day following to the island of Rhodes (Acts 21:1). There, at the harbor's entrance, Paul and his party would have seen the bronze legs of the ancient Colossus still standing on their pedestal. Originally, the Colossus stood 108 feet high on top of a fifty foot pedestal, the tallest statue in the ancient world, built c. 292–280 BC.<sup>259</sup> The statue represented The Titan sun-god, son of Helios. It collapsed in an earthquake in 226 BC, only the legs remained standing. It was one of the Seven Wonders of the ancient world.

From Rhodes, they sailed to the port of Patara on the mainland of Lycia in southern Asia. From there, they sailed across the southern Aegean with Cyprus to their portside and across to Tyre on the Phoenician coast, a distance of about 375 miles. There the ship was to unlade its cargo (Acts 21:1–3). Paul and his party spent seven days with some believers, who told Paul through the gift of prophecy that he should not go up to Jerusalem (Acts 21:3–7). From Tyre they sailed to Ptolemais and visited with some Brethren there for one day (Acts 21:7).

From Ptolemais, they sailed to Caesarea, where they remained for a week at the home of Philip the evangelist, one of the original seven deacons of the Jerusalem church (Acts 21:8–14). His four daughters prophesied. Evidently, these prophecies

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<sup>259</sup> The Colossus was about the size of the modern Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, which is 111 feet from head to foot, standing on a 65 foot foundation.

concerned Paul and his determination to go up to Jerusalem. Further, Agabus, an old prophet (Acts 11:27–28) came down from Judea, took Paul’s sash and bound himself with it, declaring that the owner of the sash would be so bound by the Jews at Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles.

This caused everyone to seek to persuade Paul not to go up to Jerusalem, but he was determined to go anyway. He was ready to suffer and die there for the cause of Christ (Acts 21:9–13). When he could not be persuaded, they let the matter lay, saying the will of the Lord be done. This being settled, they gathered up their belongings and the collection for the poor saints and traveled up to Jerusalem with several added to their party (Acts 21:15–16).

Note: The daughters of Philip were prophetesses. They did not exercise their prophetic gift in a church context, but in the privacy of their home. This was the age of spiritual gifts and there is no contradiction with Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 12:1–14:40; 1 Tim. 2:8–12, where women were to keep silence in the context of the church assembly, neither to speak out nor exercise a spiritual gift: 1 Tim. 2:8–9 (οἰδᾷσκειν δὲ γυναῖκί οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἄνδρός, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ), “But to teach, a woman, I do not allow, nor to usurp authority over the man but remain silent.” Women are forbidden to exercise a teaching position and leadership within the gathered church. Titus 2:3–5 deals with practical issues, not doctrinal teaching.

Note: was Paul consciously opposing the revealed will of God in his persistence in going to Jerusalem despite the repeated warnings through prophecy? Commentators are divided on this issue and there are arguments on both sides. It is past history to be left in the hands and purpose of God. For such a God–conquered, Spirit–filled man to knowingly disobey the will of God would seem very contradictory and utterly unlike the Apostle.

What was Paul’s overpowering motive to go up to Jerusalem? He hoped that the collection from the Gentile churches could help heal the inherent distrust of the Jewish church at Jerusalem (Rom. 15:16–17, 25–31). The church was strongly, racially, religiously, culturally and socially Jewish. They evidently could not separate their Jewishness from their Christianity as Paul did. Subsequent events would prove his fears



justified. According to some, the Jewish church had largely lost its missionary spirit and had settled itself in a Jewish society.

With Paul's entrance into Jerusalem and his meeting with James and the elders<sup>260</sup> of the Jerusalem church, the third missionary journey came to an end. The elders met with Paul and rejoiced in his ministry to the Gentiles (Acts 21:19–20).

Sadly, there is no record of the Jerusalem elders or church thanking Paul and his companions for collection for the poor saints, but seemingly a brushing aside as they returned to their narrowness and wanted Paul to accommodate himself to their Jewish request. He did so, without sacrificing the gospel, being all things to all men, and this led to his arrest and imprisonment (Acts 21:17–26). Neither are we told of any attempt to help, intercede for or even visit Paul after his arrest or during his two years imprisonment, when he could freely receive visitors (Acts 24:23).

### Paul's Arrest and First Imprisonment: Jerusalem and Caesarea (c. 58–60)

#### Summary of Paul's First Imprisonment

During his first imprisonment at Jerusalem and at Caesarea, Paul delivered three significant addresses: the first was to his own countrymen from the steps of the Tower of Antonia—the largest crowd he would ever address (Acts 21:30–22:17). The second was his defense before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem (Acts 23:1–10). The third was his final testimony before Festus and Herod Agrippa II (Acts 26:1–29). A fourth address was given to the Jewish leaders at Rome upon his arrival there (Acts 28:17–29).

While attending the four men with the termination of their vows in the temple, Paul was seen by Jewish pilgrims from Asia, who instigated a riot and made unsubstantiated charges against him. The fanatical mob tried to kill him (Acts 21:20–31).

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<sup>260</sup> Peter had long ago departed for the East. "Babylon" should be taken literally (1 Pet. 5:13). John had left Jerusalem and would finally move to Ephesus.

Paul was rescued by the Roman garrison stationed in the Tower of Antonia (Acts 21:31–39). Paul addressed the thousands gathered at the temple and gave his personal testimony, ending with the word “Gentiles,” which caused a frenzy in the mob (Acts 21:37–22:23). Brought into the fortress, he saved himself from being bound and tortured by declaring his Roman citizenship (Acts 22:24–29).

He was given a hearing before the Sanhedrin which was interrupted with violence (Acts 22:30–23:10). Because of a Jewish plot to murder him by the Zealots, he was transported to Caesarea under heavy guard to the Governor [Roman Procurator] Felix (Acts 23:11–35).

During the night, the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision, giving him great encouragement and revealing to him that he would bear witness for him in Rome (Acts 23:11). After another hearing, Paul was kept in prison until Felix’s governorship ended two years later (Acts 24:1–27).

When Porcius Festus became governor, the Jews once again sought to take him; Paul had to appeal to Caesar, and his request was granted (Acts 24:27–25:12). He was given another hearing before Festus and Herod Agrippa II, and it was determined to send him to Rome (Acts 25:13–26:32).

#### The Circumstances of Paul’s Arrest

[Acts 21:20–21:29]

The church at Jerusalem occupied a diminishing role in the spread of Christianity. It was isolated in its racial, cultural, nationalistic character and its being in the city central to Judaism. It was a church struggling with separating its racial and national character from the universal character of Christianity. James and the elders urged Paul to go to the temple, oversee and pay the expenses for the cleansing and termination of four men who had taken temporary nazirite vows (Numb. 6:1–21).<sup>261</sup> He did this,

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<sup>261</sup> Paul himself had taken such a vow privately, without any sacrifice, cleansing or going to the Temple (Acts 18:18). He could and had separated his Jewishness from his Christianity.

seeking to “be all things to all men,” and “becoming a Jew to the Jews” (1 Cor. 9:18–23).

The process took seven days, with Paul and the four men remaining in the temple precinct. It was an expensive process and Paul had only the money from the collection he had brought for the poor. He had to observe the priestly functions, animal, grain and wine offerings being offered,<sup>262</sup> the men shaved and their hair burned. These Jewish Christians were between Moses and Christ, and evidently could not separate their Jewishness from their Christianity.

### The Temple at Jerusalem

Solomon’s Temple had been destroyed in the Chaldean invasion (2 Chron. 36:14–19) (606 BC). During the Restoration Era (536–397 BC), Cyrus, King of Persia, commanded the second temple to be built (Isa. 44:28; 45:1–5; 22 Chron. 36:22–23; Ezr. 1:1–11) (538 BC). Herod the Great (c. 73–4 BC) greatly enlarged this temple and beautified it. He was one of the greatest architects of ancient history. He built fortresses, palaces and even cities, and constructed the first artificial harbor at Caesarea.<sup>263</sup>

The temple area, surrounded by a high wall, was c. 1,600 feet in length and c. 1,350 feet in width. The area was entered by several gates. The eastern gate was the principal entrance and called the “beautiful gate” (Acts 3:1–2). Along the entire southern wall was Solomon’s Porch. Along the entire eastern side to the western side, outside the temple proper, was the Court of the Gentiles, the largest single space within the Temple grounds. Here were animals to be sold for sacrifice and the money-changers’ tables.

To the northwest was the Castle or Tower of Antonia, which was the barracks of the Roman garrison in Jerusalem. Its barracks could house 1,000 men. Its turrets overlooked the temple and there were two cloisters [covered walkways] leading from the

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<sup>262</sup> Completely Old Testament: two lambs and one ram. Animal life and blood made obsolete by the blood of our Lord once-for-all, then the grain and drinking offerings (Heb. 4:14–10:22).

<sup>263</sup> See the Herodian Dynasty in vol. III of this *Survey of the Bible*.

tower to the temple, with one underground passageway. Guards were posted to watch over the temple grounds and alert the cohort to any disturbance, especially during the feasts.

The temple proper, or the sacred precinct, was comprised of covered colonnades.<sup>264</sup> The building was c. 500 feet by 400 feet, with a high ceiling of almost sixteen stories. The first, large inner court, with an ascent of fourteen steps was The Court of the Women, which contained the treasury. The second inner court, with an ascent of steps, was the Court of Israel, where only the men could enter for worship. The next, with another ascent of steps, was the Court of the Priests, containing an altar. Finally the most inner court, the equivalent of the “Holy of Holies,” which was empty, except for a large, black stone.

Separating the Court of the Gentiles from the rest of the Temple area was a chest-high, beautifully decorated wall with openings at various places. Over each entrance was a sign in Latin, Greek and Hebrew declaring that no uncircumcised Gentile could enter the sacred precincts on pain of death.<sup>265</sup>

#### Paul’s Arrest: False Charges and Assumptions

Being in the temple and among the thousands of pilgrims who had come for the Feast of Pentecost put Paul in the most extreme danger. He was in the public eye for seven days.

Toward the end of this time, he was recognized by Jewish pilgrims from Asia, who immediately raised an alarm and instigated a riot among the thousands of pilgrims crowding the temple area. They cried out that he was the great apostate who blasphemed the Jews, the Law and the temple, and had brought Greeks [uncircumcised Gentiles] into the sacred precinct. They thought that he had violated the temple by bringing in Trophimus, whom they had seen with Paul in the city (Acts

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<sup>264</sup> Descriptions of Herod’s temple may be found in various Bible Dictionaries and in Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: It Ministry and Services*.

<sup>265</sup> This “middle wall of partition” Paul spiritualizes to illustrate the truth of Jewish and Gentile believer becoming one in their access to God the Father (Eph. 2:11–22).

21:27–30). The riot became city-wide and must have involved hundreds of thousands of citizens and pilgrims (Acts 21:30–31).<sup>266</sup>

The frenzied mob then attacked Paul, dragged him out of the temple proper, so as not to pollute it with his blood. The Levites closed the temple doors to keep any pollution from entering the sacred building. The mob was in the process of beating Paul to death when the riot was observed by a guard from the Tower of Antonia, and the *Chiliarch*<sup>267</sup> took soldiers and delivered Paul from being killed.

Note: The Jews had no independent power to take a life without Roman authority except in one instance: when an uncircumcised Gentile had polluted the temple by entering into the sacred precinct. The assumption Paul had done this was sufficient cause for him to be immediately beaten or stoned to death without interference from the Roman authorities.

The whole situation was tense and filled with Jewish jealousy and hatred to the point of insane rage, while on the Roman side, it was met with suspicion and a grave sense of danger. The Jews had become increasingly aggressive and rebellious against the Romans. The final Jewish War would begin in a few years (66 AD), which would culminate in the utter destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans and over one million Jews would be crucified on the walls of Jerusalem, and another 60,000 would be taken to Rome as slaves to build the Colossaeum (70–82 AD).

Further, several incidents had occurred, some recently, which made any disturbance potentially deadly and the danger of a nation-wide revolt imminent.<sup>268</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Pentecost had the greatest number of Jews pilgrims from the Diaspora, as it was during the height of the sailing season. Upwards of a million Jews gathered in Jerusalem at that time.

<sup>267</sup> [χιλίαρχος] *Chiliarch*, Roman officer over 1,000 men. The Roman commander at Jerusalem.

<sup>268</sup> For an account of these incidents, see William Whiston, transl., *The Complete Works of Josephus*, various chapters; B. H. Carroll, *Op. cit.*, pp. 376–378.

In 44 AD, after the death of Herod Agrippa I, Cuspius Fadus, the Roman Procurator of Judea, took Herod's crown and the garments of the High Priest into the Tower of Antonia. This almost sparked a Jewish war and Claudius Caesar himself had to intervene.

In 49 AD under Cumanus, the Roman Procurator, a Roman soldier standing guard, in an act of disgust, made an insulting gesture to the Jews at the temple. They tried to stone the soldier, raised a mob and stormed the tower. In the ensuing uprising, between 10,000 to 20,000 Jews were slaughtered.

In 50 AD a Jewish highwayman robbed a Roman messenger on the road from Jerusalem down to Jericho. The Romans held the neighboring villages responsible and burned them. One soldier found a scroll of Scripture, burned it before the Jews and blasphemed. The Roman were forced to execute the soldier to avoid a war.

In 54 AD the Samaritans murdered some Jewish pilgrims on their way to a feast in Jerusalem. A patriotic highwayman named Eleazer returned the favor by killing a large number of Samaritans. They bribed Cumanus and a war started which ended with Marcus Antonius Felix becoming Procurator of Judea (51–59 AD). He captured Eleazer and sent him to Rome in chains. Later Felix hired assassins to kill Jonathan the High Priest.

This era marked the ascendancy of the *sicarii* or “dagger men,”<sup>269</sup> assassins and zealots who assassinated both pro-Roman Jews and Romans, and would eventually help precipitate the Jewish War.

Then, only seven weeks before Paul arrived in Jerusalem, an Egyptian, a false messiah, gathered 30,000 Jews to oppose the Romans. Many were killed, some were captured and the rebellion

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<sup>269</sup> The *sicarii* were assassins, so called from *sica*, Lat. a small dagger hidden under their clothing. They were an extreme group of Jewish zealots who sought to upset Roman power by private and public assassinations, especially at the Jewish feasts. This term occurs in the Greek as a *hapax legomenon* in Acts 21:38, σικάρηων, translated as “murderers in the KJV and “assassins” in the ASV.

quelled. The Egyptian escaped. Claudius Lysias, the *Chiliarch*, at first thought Paul was that Egyptian (Acts 21:37–39). Thus, the situation in Jerusalem was very tense and Paul stepped into an extremely volatile arena.

Paul was borne on the shoulders of the soldiers because of the violence of the mob. Once his true identity was known, he asked the *Chiliarch* permission to address the thousands from the steps of the tower. He was given leave to speak. Paul stood on the stairs and beckoned with his hand and when they heard him speak in their mother tongue [Aramaic],<sup>270</sup> they kept silence. Paul was to have his one opportunity to address the largest gathering of his countrymen during his entire ministry.

#### Paul's Address to the Jerusalem Multitude

[Acts 21:39–22:29]

As Paul had presented the truth to the philosophers at Athens in a manner most understandable to them, so he presents his personal testimony to his own countrymen, emphasizing those things which would grasp their attention. Amazingly, they quieted down and listened, until he uttered the one word which would fill them with rage—"Gentiles." They exploded with rancor and became almost uncontrollable in their fury. All of their rage against and denigration of the *goyim* were vehemently expressed in a most violent and disgusting manner.

The *Chiliarch* brought Paul into the tower and commanded him to be bound and readied for scourging so the truth might be known.<sup>271</sup> Paul then revealed his Roman citizenship, which caused a great stir, as Roman Law had been violated. Claudius Lysias' tone and demeanor changed and the next day he brought Paul, under his protection, before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:24–30).

As Paul began his defense, he stated that he had lived before God in all good conscience. The *Nasi*, or presiding High Priest,

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<sup>270</sup> Hebrew had ceased to be spoken since the Babylonian Captivity except by the rabbis in their studies of the Scripture. What is called "Hebrew" in the New Testament was the Aramaic, the native tongue for six centuries.

<sup>271</sup> For a description of Roman scourging, see pp. 68–69.

Ananias ben Nebedeus (46–58), commanded, contrary to the law, to smite him on the mouth. Paul, himself a former rabbi and Sanhedrinist, declared him to be a “whited wall,” or blatant hypocrite whom God would smite. Paul may not have recognized him, as there was a rapid succession of high priest at that time and Paul had not been in Jerusalem for several years, or it may have been his *ophthalmia*. He then gave an apology based on ignorance, yet respecting the office.

Note: Some hold that Paul’s statement was more than an exclamation—it was a prophecy. History paints a dark picture of Ananias ben Nebedeus. He was said to have been a tyrant and glutton, keeping the tithes from the lesser priests and Levites and starving them. He had employed the *sicarii* to assassinate others. He was sent to Rome to answer for his activities, but was returned through intrigue and once again assumed the position of *Nasi*. He was shortly deposed and hid himself in a sewer where some *sicarii* dragged him out and murdered him. God did smite that whited wall.<sup>272</sup>

Paul’s defense was short. He knew there was to be no justice or hearing before this body. He divided his hearers as he discerned the party spirit of the Sadducees and Pharisees, and declared he was a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, which was the truth. The two opposing sides tore at Paul and his very life was in danger. Lysias rescued him once more and took him back to the tower.

The Lord appeared that night to Paul in a vision, revealing that he would bear witness at Rome (Acts 23:11). This vision and revelation would be the basis on which he would later claim his right to stand before Caesar’s judgment seat (Acts 25:9–12).

That next day a plot was hatched by forty Jews, probably the *sicarii*, to murder Paul. This became known to Paul’s young nephew, who revealed this to Paul. This was finally made known to Claudius Lysias, who wrote a letter to Claudius Festus the procurator residing in Caesarea. The letter puts Lysias in a good

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<sup>272</sup> See in Josephus, *Op. cit.*, Ant. XX. 9 par. 2, and in F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit.*, pp. II, 320–322.



light, implying that he rescued Paul from the mob at the temple, understanding that he was a Roman (Acts 23:12–30).

From Jerusalem to Caesarea

[Acts 22:23–26:22]

Paul was then sent to Caesarea, accompanied by a military escort of 270: foot soldiers, lancers and cavalry. This may seem an overreaction, until one considers that Paul was a Roman citizen, the previous incidents which threatened war, and the volatile atmosphere which existed in Judea at that time. He was received by M. Antonius Felix the Roman Procurator and kept in Herod's judgment hall (Acts 23:23–35).

The next week the high priest and elders came down to Caesarea with an orator to give their charges against Paul (Acts 24:1–9). These were partial truths and false assumptions from a biased perspective. Paul's defense was, again, in the form of a testimony, framed in such a way that Felix could understand it (Acts 24:10–22).

Paul was granted relative freedom and could receive visitors. Later Felix himself with Drusilla—a beautiful young Jewish princess and younger sister of Bernice, whom he had seduced from her former husband, Azizus, King of Emesa—privately heard Paul concerning the gospel. Felix trembled. He never heard Paul again in such a context, but communed with him in hopes of securing his release through a large bribe. He knew that Paul was wrongly accused. Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus in two years' time, and Felix left Paul incarcerated (Acts 24:24–27).

Note: Paul "reasoned of righteousness, temperance and judgment to come, and Felix trembled." The language strongly implies that Paul declared the Moral Law as the medium of conviction of sin.

Felix trembled when faced with the stringent commands of the law. He was a freed slave, and rose to favor and made Procurator. He was married to a Jewess and had traditional knowledge of the Mosaic institutions. He now heard these in the context of the gospel, his own aberrant behavior and final judgment. He had an evil record as Procurator and was guilty of serious crimes against the Jews, including plunder, the

assassination of Jonathan the High Priest, and the use of the *sicarii* to kill opponents.

After two years the arrival of Porcius Festus once again opened the Jewish case against Paul. It was customary for the new Procurator to ascend to Jerusalem and meet with the ruling class and Sanhedrin. While there, the rulers made their claim against Paul. They asked Festus to send Paul up to Jerusalem to be judged there, still intending to have him murdered (Acts 25:1–3). Festus wisely refused, declaring that they should descend to Caesarea and state their case.

Eleven days later court was held with Festus on the judgment seat, surrounded by the Jewish rulers and Paul standing before them. The Jews brought many complaints against Paul, which they could not prove (Acts 25:4–7).

Paul gave no extended defense as he had before, and knowing of the previous plot on his life, refused to go up to Jerusalem to be tried by the Jews. He simply stated that he was not guilty as accused by the Jews, implying that Festus knew as much, and as a Roman citizen claimed his right to stand before Caesar's judgment seat. This request was made in light of the vision he had previously been given (Acts 23:11). After conferring with the Sanhedrin, Festus declared that Paul's request was granted (Acts 25:11–12).

Sometime later King Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice<sup>273</sup> came to pay their respects to Festus. After many days, Festus mentioned Paul and detailed his circumstances to the king and queen. Agrippa, himself a devotee to Judaism, was inclined to hear Paul personally, both seeking to have something specific to send to Caesar (Acts 25:13–27).

Paul stood before the tribunal of Festus in the company of Agrippa, Bernice, guards, attendants and others of the court. He was permitted to freely speak in his own defense. This was his third significant address during his first imprisonment. It was

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<sup>273</sup> Herod Agrippa II and his sister, Bernice, lived in incest for most of their adult lives. See "The Herodian Dynasty" in Vol. III of this *Survey of the Bible*.

essentially his testimony, which was interrupted and had some interplay with both Festus and Agrippa (Acts 26:1–30). He again spoke of his former life as a persecutor, his life-transforming conversion, his vision in Jerusalem and his subsequent consistent ministry.

Festus could not contain himself any longer and cried out, “Insanity, Paul! Much learning has driven you insane!”<sup>274</sup> Paul answered in a very intelligent, deliberate authoritative and elevated manner that he was not insane but spoke forth words of truth and soberness.<sup>275</sup> He then seeks to enlist the testimony of Agrippa, who was a Jewish proselyte, by appealing to his belief in the prophets. Paul was certain of his argument, to which Agrippa replied that with a few words [such a short argument] would Paul make him play the part of a Christian?<sup>276</sup> In reply to Agrippa’s play on words, Paul turns them upon Agrippa himself into a dramatic plea for the gospel, holding up his hand with a chain dangling from it (Acts 26:29–30).

The hearing was ended. Festus and Agrippa had a private conference, agreeing that Paul was innocent of any wrongdoing, and that, had he not appealed unto Caesar, he could have been freed. This was their way of distancing themselves from the

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<sup>274</sup> Acts 26:24, φησιν· μάνη, Παῦλε· τὰ πολλά σε γράμματα εἰς μανίαν περιτρέπει.

<sup>275</sup> Acts 26:25, “speak forth,” ἀποφθέγγομαι, “to speak in an elevated, intelligent, dignified voice, a prophetic utterance.” This word only occurs three times in the New Testament, all in Acts: 2:4, “utterance,” 14, “said,” and 26:25. Luke chose the one term with which Paul, rising in oratory, silenced Festus.

<sup>276</sup> Acts 26:28, ἐν ὀλίγῳ με πείθεις Χριστιανὸν ποιῆσαι. We take this to be said, not seriously, but as a play on words, even spoken in derision. Paul then turned these on Herod himself by another play on words, declaring that we would that all men might be fully persuaded and even as he was—apart from his chain, evidently dramatically raising his hand with the chain dangling from it. Paul was very capable of rising to the very heights of dramatic oratory. From the time of his conversion, as has been noted previously, Paul never met his intellectual equal.

situation and appeasing the Jews, who would be free from Paul, his being sent to Rome (Acts 26:30–32). Expediency in politics...

### The Journey to Rome (c. 60–61)

[Acts 27:1–28:16]

#### A Summary of the Sea Journey to Rome

Paul was put under guard as a prisoner for this trip, and at least at first was chained to a soldier. The first ship was a coastal vessel that sailed from Caesarea to Sidon, to Myra on the Lycian coast. Paul was transferred to a large grain ship from Alexandria on its destination to Puteoli in Italy.

Due to the winds, the ship passed under Crete then, seeking to make a secure harbor for the winter, sought to sail around the cape of Matala to Phoenix, but was swept to the southwest by a typhonic winter gale which lasted for fourteen days. During this time, Paul took moral command of the ship.

The ship was finally run aground on the island of Melita where the crew and passengers remained for three months until the sailing season began in early February. They found another grain ship from Alexandria and sailed to Syracuse, and then to Puteoli in the Bay of Naples on the western coast of Italy.

#### From Caesarea to Crete

[Acts 27:1–12]

Paul was a prisoner on this trip; his companions were Timothy, Luke and Aristarchus. The military escort was headed by a centurion, Julius Claudius.

Note: The classic work on the voyage and shipwreck of the Apostle Paul is the singular work by James Smith. It is filled with information and graphic details. It has gone through five editions since its first publication in 1848, and is referenced in all the major works on the life and labors of the Apostle. See James Smith, Esq., *The Voyage and Shipwreck of St. Paul in the bibliography*.

From Luke's mastery of many technical nautical terms throughout this section, it has been suggested that he was at one time a ship's surgeon.<sup>277</sup> Both Luke and Paul were seasoned sea travelers. Paul had already sailed throughout the

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<sup>277</sup> James Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 120–129.

eastern Mediterranean for years, been shipwrecked three times, and been adrift in the water for a day and a half in one instance (2 Cor. 11:25–26). On this trip, he would experience his fourth shipwreck.

Paul used some nautical terms which he spiritualized to illustrate doctrinal truth in his letters.<sup>278</sup> He was also given to the use of many military metaphors from his association with Roman soldiers and guards, e.g., 1 Cor. 9:7; Eph. 6:10–17; 2 Tim. 2:3–4, as well as metaphors from athletic contests (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 12:1–2), nature in God’s ordained creation (e.g., Rom. 1:26–27; 11:24; 1 Cor. 11:14) and agriculture (e.g., 1 Cor. 9:7–11; 2 Tim. 2:6).

In ancient times, without a compass and with sailing vessels which relied on favorable winds or tacking at an angle to gain headway, the trip to Rome was to be lengthy. Much of the sailing had to be during the daytime when the winds came up; at night at times, the winds died down and it was dangerous to be adrift in the darkness. In the open seas, away from rocky shorelines and small islands, sailors were guided by celestial navigation. The course of the ship was a slow tacking or zig-zag pattern to catch the favorable winds and keep to the coast—a dangerous journey when along the many islands and narrows of the eastern Aegean Sea.

The trip took them by a coastal ship from Caesarea to Sidon on the Syrian coast, a twenty-four hour trip. Julius, the Roman centurion, gave Paul leave to visit friends and refresh himself.

Note: Each Prisoner was chained with a long, fine, metal chain to a soldier. There were two soldiers for each prisoner, as they served in shifts. The treatment was often rough, depending upon the personalities of both the individual prisoner and soldier.

It is quite possible that Paul was not chained, but granted liberty as a Roman citizen and also because of his age, physical condition and demeanor.

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<sup>278</sup> E.g., Heb. 6:18–20, “anchor” [ἄγκυρα] and “forerunner” [πρόδρομος]. The ἄγκυρα was either an anchor or a massive rock to which the hawser would be secured so the sailors could pull the ship in against the wind. The πρόδρομος was the one in a small skiff who rowed into the harbor against the wind to secure the hawser.

The ship continued along the Pamphylian [Cilician] Sea between Cyprus and the western coast of Cilicia and Pamphlyia to Myra in Lycia at the mouth of the Andriacus River, a distance of some 250 miles.<sup>279</sup> There they found and boarded a large grain ship from Alexandra, Egypt, headed for Rome, the destined port was Puteoli on the western coast of Italy (Acts 27:1–6).<sup>280</sup> Egypt was the granary of the Empire, the “Food Basket of the Mediterranean World.”

The ship carried 276 people, including the crew, soldiers and passengers (Acts 27:37). Contrary winds slowed them as they made scarcely any headway around the Island of Rhodes to Cnidus in Asia, a trip of some 130 miles. The ship then headed under the Island of Crete past Salomne to a harbor called “Fair Havens,” the port for the city of Lasea (Acts 27:7–8).

#### From Crete to Melita

[Acts 27:13–44]

The sailing season was roughly from February through early October. The season for sailing and shipping had ended and traveling by sea was then dangerous.<sup>281</sup> Paul, the seasoned sea traveler, warned the ship captain and centurion of the possible consequences: the loss of the ship, the cargo and even of their lives. They chose to ignore him, choosing a better anchorage for the winter in Phoenix (Acts 27:9–13).

Note: The “Alexandrian Fleet” were large grain ships which plied the waters from Egypt to Rome and supplied the empire with wheat.

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<sup>279</sup> This distance is reckoned in a straight course, tacking to make headway with the various winds would have made the trip much longer.

<sup>280</sup> These Egyptian grain ships were among the largest in the Mediterranean trade, between 500 to 1,000 tons. They carried Roman officials and passengers in addition to cargo.

<sup>281</sup> Acts 27:9. The reference to the “fast” being past refers to the Annual Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*. For Jewish pilgrims going to the three major Feasts [Passover, Pentecost and *Yom Kippur*] in Jerusalem, the Passover marked the very beginning of the sailing season and The Day of Atonement in early October the end. Thus, Pentecost was the greatest attended feast of the religious year.

This shipping industry was so important and strategic to the food supply that it had been nationalized by the empire. The owners and captain of these ships were basically employees of the State. Thus, both the ship's master [captain] and owner and the centurion, as the ranking officer, had the determining input and decision as to the ship's maneuvers and route.

When the Alexandrian grain ships reached their final destination at Puteoli in the Bay of Naples, they alone could hoist their top sails to mark their identity, and were always eagerly greeted by the population.<sup>282</sup>

As they left the harbor and headed around the Cape of Matala toward Phoenix to the north, a short trip of thirty-four miles, they were caught in a vicious, tempestuous east-north-eastern cyclonic wind or typhoon called *Euroclydon* [Εὐροκλύων],<sup>283</sup> which at times struck the Mediterranean Sea during the winter.<sup>284</sup> This fierce wind with tempestuous, high seas would drive them at its mercy for fourteen days and nights in Adria (Acts 27:27).<sup>285</sup>

As they passed the westerly island of Clauda, they finally, with great difficulty, pulled the skiff aboard. It had to be secured or it would severely damage the ship. With only sufficient sail [a small storm sail] to keep the ship stabilized and prevent it from

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<sup>282</sup> See F. F. Bruce, Acts, p. 503; James Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>283</sup> Εὐροκλύων is the correct reading, see James Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 102–105, 159–161. The wording [τυφωνικός, hence “typhoon”] denotes a circular swirling of both winds and water, a confusion of cross seas, heavy spray and fierce, swirling winds.

<sup>284</sup> There were two fierce windstorms in the Mediterranean, the *Eurokluon* in the winter and the *Sirocco* in the summer. The first was a cold ENE gale and the latter was a hot, southern wind which blew in from North Africa and the Arabian desert. Both were devastating and feared by seamen.

<sup>285</sup> The term “Adria” refers to the Adriatic Sea, causing some biblical critics to hold that the ship was in the Adriatic Sea close to Italy and on another Island, the Illyrian Melita, hundreds of miles to the north at the southern part of Dalmatia. In ancient times, the term “Adria” referred to the sea from the Greek Peloponnesus to Italy, including much of what is known as the Aegean Sea. For a full discussion, see James Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 162–167, 280–285; William M. Ramsay, *Op. cit.*, p. 334.

broaching [turning broadside and even capsizing], they girded it with ropes or bands [a process known as frapping], kept a starboard tack and scudded before the storm.<sup>286</sup> Evidently, the ship's timbers were separating and the hull was leaking badly.

As the storm progressed, the crew and passengers lightened the ship, casting overboard anything that was not essential, even the ship's tackling [including, probably, the long, heavy mainyard] (Acts 27:14–19). They feared being swept to the southwest to the *Syrtis* on the North African coast.<sup>287</sup>

After many days, their hope seemed gone. No one ate; all were seasick, weak and afraid. Due to the storm, rain, waves and leakage, the food stores were spoiled or had been washed overboard. Most ancient vessels had a cooking hut on the stern, and this had evidently been washed away at the beginning.

The cargo of wheat was waterlogged, swollen, heavy and ruined; the hull was leaking badly and they were in imminent danger of foundering.<sup>288</sup> Fourteen days had passed and the ship had endured the typhonic storm for about 476 miles,<sup>289</sup> lost in storm clouds, heavy rain, fierce seas, without the possibility of fixing its position by celestial navigation by day or night (Acts 27:20).

Paul then stood forth and reminded the captain and everyone else that they should have listened to him—but he was not a prophet of doom; he also gave them much encouragement. He told them of an angelic vision which revealed that he would stand

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<sup>286</sup> To scud is to ride with the storm, with only a small sail to keep the ship from broaching.

<sup>287</sup> Acts 27:17. Not "...falling into quicksands..." The *Σύρτις* was a stretch of the North African coast of modern Tunisia and Tripoli with large, shallow bays crossed with sandbars. A ship might be wrecked on these miles from shore.

<sup>288</sup> To founder is to sink by filling with water, the most common reason for the sinking of these ancient ships.

<sup>289</sup> The distance has been computed by analyzing the windage, direction and drift time, at 476.6 miles, James Smith, *Op. cit.*, pp. 125–128.



before Caesar in Rome, and that everyone would be saved,<sup>290</sup> only the ship and cargo would be lost, and that they would be cast ashore on a certain island. He strongly and unashamedly affirmed his faith in God before them all in the context of an awful, life-threatening, prolonged crisis.

Note: Angelic ministries in the Book of Acts. Angels are mentioned twenty times in this book. On five occasions, there was an angelic visitation involving Peter and John, Peter in prison; Cornelius, a proselyte of the gate, and Paul (Acts 5:19; 8:26; 10:3ff; 12:7ff; 27:23), once a visitation of Divine judgment upon Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12:23).

At that point Paul assumed moral command of that vessel and everyone in it. His word would later direct the crew and soldiers, who would obey it without question: some sailors were about to abandon ship in the skiff, but Paul told the centurion that if these sailors did not remain on board, the passengers would all be lost. The centurion immediately had the soldiers cut the ropes and set the skiff adrift (Acts 27:30–32). Paul's second encouragement came by personal example when he urged them to eat some food, then thanked God for it and ate before them (Acts 27:33–36).

The ship grew close to land on the fourteenth night; the sailors evidently heard the crash and roar of breakers upon the rocks of Point Koura and sounded to discover the depth. The land was low-lying so they could not discern the coast or the bay until daylight.<sup>291</sup> The ship was secured until daybreak with four anchors from the stern. The cargo of ruined wheat was cast overboard to lighten the ship (Acts 27:38).

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<sup>290</sup> Acts 27:24. "...God has graciously [κεχάρισται] given you all those who sail with you." The grace of God at work among many for the sake of one of God's servants.

<sup>291</sup> The bay is in the low lands and bound to the east by Point Koura, a rocky point extending far out to sea. The ship providentially just passed it within less than a quarter mile and was rammed into the muddy, clay beach to the west. See James Smith, *Op. cit.*, p. 121. This bay was removed some eighty miles from the main port of the island, Valetta, and has been called St. Paul's Bay since early Christian times.

Some sailors sought to escape for themselves and leave everyone else behind and the ship abandoned without its crew. Paul's instinct caused him to have the skiff cut off from the ship so the sailors, who were needed to man the ship and bring it to shore, could not escape. It was the soldiers' counsel to kill all the prisoners lest any of them escaped,<sup>292</sup> but the centurion, determined to save [βουλόμενος διασῶσαι] Paul, prohibited such action.

Paul's demeanor, conversation, self-possession and testimony saved the life of every prisoner, indeed the lives of everyone on board. When the sails were hoisted and lines were cut, the ship was driven to shore and onto the muddy beach, and the stern broken up by the violence of the waves. Everyone made it to shore safely. Some swimming; others floating in on boards (27:29, 39–44).<sup>293</sup> Paul had survived his fourth shipwreck.

#### Paul's Ministry at Melita

[Acts 28:1–11]

The survivors found that the island was Melita [Malta]. There they would remain among the Barbarians<sup>294</sup> for three months until the sailing season began in February. They would board another grain ship from Alexandria, bound for Rome, which had wintered at Valetta, the regular port, some eighty miles distant.

Note: Mark the practical lives, actions and attitudes of these Christian travelers. Paul and his companions were active in warning of danger (Acts 27:9–10), helping the crew of the ship pull in and secure the skiff, in helping cast off the tackle and dumping the ruined cargo (Acts 27:15–16, 19), in giving encouragement by the word of God (Acts 27:21–26), in taking moral command of the situation by force of their lives, words and

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<sup>292</sup> As with the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:27f), if a prisoner escaped, the guard would receive his sentence, which might mean death.

<sup>293</sup> A preacher and missionary, who had had trouble with church, deacon and missionary boards, commented that this is the only mention of "boards" in the New Testament.

<sup>294</sup> "Barbarians" were not necessarily uncivilized people; they were uncultured, non-Greek speaking, and not members of the Roman or Greek societies.

demeanor (Acts 27:30–32), gathering sticks for firewood (Acts 28:1–2), and generally making themselves useful in a practical way.

True Christianity is a consistent and practical religion, not mystical, passive or separate from the real world. It is giving of self, industrious in doing good and showing grace and mercy when others are either paralyzed with fear or occupied with self-interest. Paul was enabled to perform miracles of healing and in return the native people gave him and the others needed supplies and cared for them (Acts 28:8–10). Paul remained in moral command during their stay on Melita.

As Paul was gathering firewood, a viper fastened itself on his hand. The natives thought he was a criminal and though he had escaped the shipwreck, fate had destined his death. But Paul shook the viper off into the fire and did not demonstrate any symptoms of poisoning. The natives watched him and changed their minds, saying that he was a god—the very reverse of Paul’s experience at Lystra (Acts 14:8–19; 28:3–6). This was a passive miracle which opened the occasion for evangelization and a healing ministry among the inhabitants.

Note: It has been objected that there are no poisonous snakes on Malta. At that time the island was heavily wooded and largely uninhabited. Many species are extinct or extremely rare when civilization encroaches into undeveloped areas. Modern Malta has been transformed into a heavily inhabited island, especially through the years of World War II and the Mediterranean military ground, sea and air campaigns.

The chief man of the island was named Publius,<sup>295</sup> who gave everyone generous hospitality. His father was very sick with very high fevers and aggravated dysentery. Paul prayed, laid his hands on him and healed him (Acts 28:7–8). Others on the island who had diseases and sicknesses came and were healed. This resulted in a great out-pouring of kind hospitality and provisions during their three month stay (Acts 28:9–10).

Who could tell what impression these miracles had on everyone who had been on board and on the natives of the island?

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<sup>295</sup> Publius was the leading official or legate [τῷ πρώτῳ τῆς νήσου] of the island. Malta was a dependency under the authority and power of the Roman Province of Sicily.

Certainly Paul spoke and evangelized during this time. Throughout this whole ordeal, Paul demonstrated a consistent, practical and earnest Christianity.

### From Melita to Rome and Prison

[Acts 28:11–31]

At the end of three months, sailing season beginning in February, the centurion secured berths for Paul and his companions on another grain ship, which had wintered at Melita at the regular port of Valetta. It was bound for Puteoli, the harbor south of Rome in the Bay of Naples which was the final destination of the “Alexandrian Fleet.” Its sign or name corresponded to the carved, painted figures on the bow: Castor and Pollux.<sup>296</sup>

The ship sailed from Valetta to Syracuse in Sicily, a distance of eighty miles. Syracuse was the most important city of Sicily with its double harbor. From Syracuse, the ship sailed to Rhegium at the very “toe” of Italy’s “boot,” waiting for three days for favorable winds to take it through the Strait of Messina. To portside, close to the straits, travelers could see Mount Etna in Sicily, the tallest volcano in Europe.

The following day, the ship finally arrived at Puteoli, its final destination in the Bay of Naples—180 miles in two days. Naples was also the home port of the imperial fleet. Mount Vesuvius could be seen to the southeast, dominating the landscape.<sup>297</sup>

From this point onward, travel would be by land on the great Appian Way, “The Queen of Roads,”<sup>298</sup> which led into Rome, a distance of some 140 miles. This trip would traverse through

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<sup>296</sup> Castor and Pollux: the twins [Διοσκούροις] which were the sons of Zeus and Leda, the titular gods and protectors of sailors.

<sup>297</sup> Mt. Vesuvius would erupt in eighteen years (79 AD), covering the area with heavy ash and obliterating the city of Pompeii—with Corinth, one of the two most openly wicked and depraved cities of the empire. Drusilla, the wife of Felix, would die there with her son.

<sup>298</sup> Constructed by Appius Claudius in 442 BC of stone blocks. It was functional and still in pristine condition centuries later. See Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, p. 667, footnote 5.

hillside vineyards and orchards, across rivers and canals, and give a view of the beautiful Italian countryside in the early spring.

The towns and cities would be filled with the same types of people Paul had encountered in all the large cities of his travels: officials, soldiers, families, merchants, strangers, artisans, slaves<sup>299</sup> and the scum and dregs of the earth which had flocked to the capital of the Roman world. Rome had representatives from every country and religion in the Mediterranean world. The country would also be religiously similar, with its pagan temples, shrines and pagan devotees.

It had been some three years since Paul had written to the believers at Rome (Rom. 1:7–13; 15:20–24, 28–29, 32), and upon his arrival, the word spread quickly. At Puteoli, some Christian brethren met Paul and his companions and they were able to spend seven days resting and rejoicing in fellowship. From the next cities, the Appii Forum and the Three Taverns, other brethren came to meet him. Some he already knew; others he would meet for the first time. What blessed once-in-a-lifetime fellowship it must have been—which only true believers can know and experience (Acts 28:14–15).

Over the final rise of the Alban Hills, Paul, the greatest man in history—now aged, worn, scarred and bent—caught his first blurred glimpse of Rome, the capital of the world. Here the Appian Way was lined with the sepulchers of and monuments to great men. He entered it unknown except to some believers, guards, and as a prisoner.

But his message was destined to overcome the world's mightiest empire, and the world itself would pass from ancient paganism into the Christian era. The future of Western Civilization would be determined, not by armies, navies, the power of human government and legislation or by dictators, but by and through the spoken and written Word of God.

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<sup>299</sup> Rome had over a million slaves. Almost every culture was supported by slavery. Roman slaves were brought from every part of the empire: Greeks, Jews, Nubians, Egyptians, Asians and Arabs.

### The City of Rome and Imperial Power

The City of Rome was situated on the coast fifteen miles inland from the mouth of the Tiber River. Founded in 735 BC, it was situated on seven hills: Quirinal Hill, Viminal Hill, Esquiline Hill, Caelian Hill, Capitoline Hill, Palatine Hill and Aventine Hill. The city was approximately six square miles in area with thirteen miles of walls surrounding it. Rome was also divided into seven districts. According to archeological studies and ancient inscriptions, it boasted a population of over four million people within and without its walls: citizens, government officials, military officers, merchants, artisans, the rabble and slaves.<sup>300</sup>

In its center was the Roman Forum on which stood the Senate House, a huge assembly hall and the temples for the gods Mars and Saturn. This central Forum also contained the golden milestone from which every road distance in the empire was measured. Caesar's *Praetorium*, or judgment hall, was located here, and the palace Praetorian Guard, the personal bodyguards of Caesar, had quarters adjacent to the palace.<sup>301</sup>

The various hills had temples to the gods and the palaces of the emperor and nobles: Capitoline Hill had several temples, including the temple of Jupiter, the head of the Roman Pantheon of Gods. Palatine Hill was the location of the emperor's palace and other noblemen. On the Caelian Hill was the temple to the deified Emperor Claudius, and on the Quirinal Hill were forums built by Julius Caesar and Augustus.

There were monuments and roads in every direction, temples, triumphal arches, basilicas, palaces, fountains and mausoleums. Toward the outside of the city were tenant

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<sup>300</sup> Older scholars and historians estimated the population to be about two million inhabitants, but more recent research and the discovery of an ancient inscription at Ostia, a district in Rome, gave the statistic in 14 AD at the death of Augustus of 4,100,000. See D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, p. 165.

<sup>301</sup> The Praetorian Guard, the elite of the Roman military, had a palace guard and also the main Praetorian Camp, which was located to the north, outside the city walls.

buildings, slums and ghettos. These were often flimsy and subject to both collapse and fire. The government provided the working poor with free wheat, water and free public baths. Aqueducts brought two to three million gallons of water a day from great distances.

In the valley between the Palatine and Aventine Hills was the great *Circus Maximus*, the ancient chariot racing stadium, the place for public games, which were related to pagan religious festivals. It could seat 150,000 spectators.<sup>302</sup> These diversions helped keep the restless population occupied. Gambling was rampant and riots were common. By 54 AD, there were 159 holidays a year, with ninety-three of these devoted to the games. The great Colossaeum had not yet been constructed.

Note: To the east of the central forum was the great Colossaeum, known as the Flavian Amphitheater, where the government provided, free of charge, athletic events and gladiatorial games for the population. Here, gladiators fought each other to the death or fought with wild beasts. Even mock naval battles were fought, with the arena filled with water. It was named for a great statue, "The Colossus of Nero," located by the side of the arena.

The Colossaeum was constructed between 70–82 AD by Emperor Vespasian, using 60,000 Jewish slaves.<sup>303</sup> It could seat 50,000 spectators. Dimensions: 615 feet long, 510 feet wide and 157 feet high. Here, many Christians would later be martyred in the most horrendous ways for the pleasure of the bloodthirsty crowds during the Roman State persecutions. It is estimated that in its 392 years of use as a place of violent entertainment, 400,000 people met their death.

The Roman Emperor in Paul's time was Nero (54–68 AD), "the infamous, the most bestial man that ever occupied a throne."<sup>304</sup> "The world never entrusted its imperial absolutism to

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<sup>302</sup> The *Circus Maximus* was 2,037 feet in length and 387 feet in width.

<sup>303</sup> These Jewish slaves were brought to Rome by the Roman General Titus after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple.

<sup>304</sup> B. H. Carroll, *Op. cit.*, p. 425.

a more despicable specimen of humanity.”<sup>305</sup> He had not yet fully manifested his brutal insanity, although his throne had been established by bloodshed without and within his immediate family.

He either murdered or had murdered his rivals, including his younger half-brother, Britannicus, both of his wives, Octavia and Poppea, and his mother Agrippina, who herself was implicated in poisoning her husband, the Emperor Claudius, and led to the suicide of Lucius Julius Silvanus, who had previously been betrothed to Octavia.<sup>306</sup>

### Paul’s Two Years of Imprisonment at Rome (c. 61–63)

[Acts 28:14–31]

#### A Summary of the First Imprisonment

Paul was brought to Rome as a prisoner in 61 AD. He was given over to the captain of the guard [the Praetorian Prefect. Gk: στρατοπεδάρχ Lat: *Perfecto Praetori*, Acts 28:16], who allowed him to rent a private dwelling, yet remain chained to a soldier by the wrist as a prisoner.<sup>307</sup> This Prefect may have been the kindly disposed Afrinius Burrus.<sup>308</sup> Paul’s house was doubtless close to the Praetorian Camp outside the walls, to the north of the city. The trial was delayed for at least a year or more, a common occurrence at that time.

Paul was allowed visitors and friends, and carried on correspondence with the various churches. These letters were carried by his associates: Timothy, Luke, Aristarchus, Epaphras from Colossae, Epaphroditus from Philippi and Tychicus from

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<sup>305</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Op. cit.*, II, p. 407.

<sup>306</sup> This section on Rome was condensed largely from Robert L. Reymond, *Op. cit.*, pp. 226–227 with studies from Conybeare & Howson, F. W. Farrar, et. al.

<sup>307</sup> This minimal *custodia militaris* was known as *observatio*.

<sup>308</sup> Burrus is seen by history as a just and kind person. His successors, Fenius Rufus and Tigellinus, openly unruly and wicked officials, marked the beginning of the downturn of Nero’s administration. See. Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, p. 723, footnotes 1 and 2.



Asia. Onesimus, the escaped slave of Philemon was converted at Rome.

Paul, constantly chained to a guard, could not pursue his vocation in *cilicium*, and so was dependent upon the charity of others, as were his companions. Luke may have practiced medicine. Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippian church to bring Paul financial help (Phil. 1:2–5; 4:14–19). Note the def. art. in 1:5, “...your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.” τοῦ νῦν, i.e., “the now,” a subtle reference to their gift brought by Epaphroditus. Paul penned his “Prison Epistles” during this time: Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon and Philippians.

From passages in his Prison Epistles and the Pastorals, it is evident that Paul anticipated being released. Universal Christian tradition, early Church Fathers and their histories, hold that he was released and returned to his missionary labors from c. 63–67 AD until rearrested and finally martyred during the Neronian Persecution, c. 68 AD.

#### The “Prison Epistles” of Paul

The “Prison Epistles” of Paul are: Colossians (62),<sup>309</sup> Philemon (62),<sup>310</sup> Ephesians (62),<sup>311</sup> and Philippians (63).<sup>312</sup> Upon an examination of the contents of each letter, this general order may be discerned with some degree of certainty. Colossians and Ephesians are closely linked in both date and issues. Both reveal an apologetic stance against incipient Gnostic teaching (e.g., Col. 1:15–17, 26–27; 2:2–4, 8–23; Eph. 1:3–14; 2:5–10; 3:3–21; 4:17–19; 6:10–18).

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<sup>309</sup> See pp. 327ff.

<sup>310</sup> See pp. 385ff.

<sup>311</sup> See pp. 297ff.

<sup>312</sup> See pp. 315ff.

Col. 1:9–20 and Eph. 1:3–14 are parallel, encompassing the whole of the Divine eternal purpose.<sup>313</sup> Philemon is a personal letter on behalf of Onesimus, Philemon's runaway slave, who was converted under Paul's ministry in Rome. Tychicus carried the Colossian and Ephesian Epistles and the letter to Philemon to Ephesus and Colossae, taking Onesimus with him (Eph. 6:21, 24; Col. 4:7–9, 18). In this letter, he not only pled on behalf of Onesimus (Phlm. 10–19), but anticipated his soon release, as he also did in Philippians (Phlm. 22; Phil. 1:21–28).

#### Paul and the Jewish Leaders at Rome

The Jewish colony at Rome was first established when the Roman General Pompey brought a large number of Jewish slaves to the city upon the conquest of Judea in 63 BC.<sup>314</sup> With the eruption of a great disturbance in the Jewish community over one, *Chrestus*,<sup>315</sup> Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome in 49 AD. Many of the Jews who had been expelled from Rome at that time had returned (e.g., Acts 18:1; Rom. 16:3). Historians reveal at least ten synagogues in the Jewish quarter or ghetto and a Jewish population of at least 40,000 at the time Paul was in Rome.

After three days getting settled in his new surroundings, Paul contacted the Jewish leaders, informed them of his situation, and gave a short defense. They had neither heard nor received letters concerning him, but knew only that the Christian sect was spoken of negatively by Jews throughout the Diaspora (Acts 28:17–22). By this means, Paul knew that no communications or emissaries had been sent to Rome from Judea or the Sanhedrin.

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<sup>313</sup> Col. 1:9–20 is the longest single sentence in the Greek NT, 218 words. Eph 1:3–14 is the second-longest sentence, 202 words. The Ephesian statement is the most profound sentence in Scripture. See William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, p. 4.

<sup>314</sup> C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans*, p. 6.

<sup>315</sup> Most scholars hold that the historian Suetonius probably referred to an uprising of the Jews against Christians, *Chrestus* being a Latin corruption of Χρίστος.

A day was arranged for Paul to fully inform them of his message. The day arrived and Paul spent hours carefully laying out the truth of the gospel as the fulfillment of the Jewish Scriptures, the Law and the Prophets. Some believed, but most remained unmoved. Paul ended his lengthy dissertation with a quotation from Isaiah (Isa. 6:9–10),<sup>316</sup> closing with a determination to go to the Gentiles, who would receive the truth, and the Jews departed. This address, the reference in Acts 17:2–3, and the sermon in Acts 13:16–41, encapsulate the method and message of Paul’s ministry to the Jews.

Paul’s first Roman imprisonment did not stifle his evangelism (Acts 28:30–31). He had a hearing among many visitors, and an outreach throughout the city which resulted in the discovery and conversion of Onesimus (Phlm. 10). He lived, preached and prayed in the presence of many of the Praetorian Guard, to whom he was chained.

He would stand before Caesar, members of the Roman Senate and the two heads of the Praetorian Guard.<sup>317</sup> His testimony would embolden others, and although Christ was preached by some antagonistically and others positively, he rejoiced in it all (Phil. 1:12–18). At Rome, contrary to expectation, Paul revealed that he had a true, pioneer missionary work.<sup>318</sup>

#### Observations on Paul’s First Imprisonment and Trial

The charges against Paul were three-fold: first, causing factious disturbances among all the Jews of the Diaspora and in Judea. Second, of being a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes,

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<sup>316</sup> Our Lord Himself quoted this passage in Matt. 13:14–15; Mk. 4:12; Lk. 8:10 and in Jn. 12:39–40.

<sup>317</sup> Phil. 1:13, the word “palace,” τῷ πραιτωρίῳ, refers to the *Praetorium*, Caesar’s judgment seat, and the Imperial Court, composed of Caesar, twenty Roman Senators and the heads of the Pretorian Guard—the Supreme Court of the Roman world. Cf. Acts 23:11; 27:24. There Paul declared the gospel.

<sup>318</sup> Phil. 1:12f. “Furtherance,” προκοπήν, lit: “cutting before,” used of the “pioneers” or scouts of the Roman army who cut and marked the path for the following army.

which involved heresy before the Mosaic Law. Third, an attempt to profane the temple at Jerusalem (Acts 24:5–6). The first could be made to be seditious and so an offence against the Roman government. The second sought to make Christianity a *religio illicita*, a crime only recognized later with the burning of Rome, which Nero conveniently blamed on the Christians.

Up to that time, Rome considered Christianity to be only a sect within Judaism. The third offence was meant to imply that Rome had protected the Jewish religion as a *religio licita* and such would include the right to punish anyone who profaned the temple.<sup>319</sup>

Before Felix and later, before Festus, Paul defended himself and these charges had been dismissed as baseless. Paul had been forced to appeal to Caesar—his right as a Roman citizen—to keep from going back to Jerusalem where the *sicarii* had plotted to murder him (Acts 25:1–12).

Paul found out through the Jews at Rome that no one had sent word or emissaries from Judea against him—a strategic piece of intelligence.

There are several reasons and possibilities why Paul's trial was delayed. It is possible that the Sanhedrin had dropped the charges, due to Paul's Roman citizenship. To have him in Rome as a prisoner and away from Judea and the Jews of the Diaspora may have been sufficient. It would take months for the Jews to travel to Rome to bring charges against him—charges which were essentially religious and neither substantial nor political—and Roman Law required the personal presence of the prosecutor.

The papers sent with the centurion Julius from Festus concerning Paul's appeal to Caesar and the baseless accusations may have caused a delay. The testimony of Julius himself might have lent its force and, perhaps, even that of Publius. The arbitrariness of Nero characteristically meant long delays in such matters. Further, Christianity seems to have penetrated Caesar's very household. On the other hand, Nero's second wife, Poppea

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<sup>319</sup> See Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 607–610.

Sabina, had become a Jewish proselyte, which might have had a negative effect, but evidently, it did not.<sup>320</sup>

Whatever, the cause or causes, Paul's trial was delayed for about a year. He finally stood before Caesar and the Imperial Court (Acts 9:15–16; 23:11; 25:11–12; 27:24) and was, according to his anticipation, acquitted and set free. This is the uniform testimony of early church history and the early Church fathers. Further, there are passages in the Pastoral Epistles which are inexplicable with only one Roman imprisonment.

Why did Luke end his record and the Book of Acts at this point? Possible reasons: first, he ran out of parchment. Both Luke's Gospel record and the Book of Acts, the two longest books [scrolls] of the New Testament, each took up an entire scroll.

Note: The mss. of the first five centuries were in the form of papyrus scrolls, each a standard length. The uncial text did not divide the words, and had a set number of letters per line and lines per section. The later, codex [book] form, had the same.<sup>321</sup>

Second, Luke may have intended a third scroll. Another possibility is that Luke was simply too busy with his work as a medical doctor and in the itinerant ministry to begin a third work. This might be the case if he accompanied Paul in the interim ministry between the two imprisonments.

### Paul's Release, Final Imprisonment and Martyrdom (c. 63–68)

[1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:15–18; 4:6–22; Tit. 1:5; 3:12]

The Pastoral Epistles (c. 63–67)<sup>322</sup>

It is the universal testimony of early Christianity that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment and returned to his anticipated missionary travels, going to Spain, back to Macedonia, to Asia and finally visiting Crete and the churches of Lycus Valley: Colossae, Laodecia and Hieropolis. There are

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<sup>320</sup> Nero later murdered Poppea, though she was pregnant at the time, by kicking her to death in his rage.

<sup>321</sup> See Vol. III, p. 350, footnote 355 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

<sup>322</sup> See pp. 358ff, 364ff, and 373ff.

passages in the Pastoral Epistles which cannot be fitted into a single imprisonment. Conybeare and Howson note:

...unless we are prepared to dispute the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles, we must admit not only that St. Paul was liberated from his first imprisonment, but that he continued his Apostolic labors for at least some years afterwards....after St. Paul's Roman imprisonment he was traveling at liberty in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), Crete (Tit. 1:5), Macedonia (1Tim. 1:3), Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), and Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12), and that he was afterwards a second time in prison in Rome (2 Tim. 1:16–17).<sup>323</sup>

Paul wrote that he left Titus in Crete (Tit. 1:5), implying that he had been there and established churches, something not known from his previous ministry.<sup>324</sup> Further, if Paul wrote Hebrews, then he had been set at liberty and remained in Rome for a time (Heb. 13:23). Paul anticipated his release and journey to Philemon at Colossae (Phlm. 22).

If Clement, Paul's disciple and co-laborer in Phil. 4:3 was Clement of Rome, who wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians in the first century (c. 96), then we have a strong testimony for Paul's release, as he testifies that Paul preached to the extremity of the west [Spain] before his martyrdom. The Muratorian Canon (c. 170) also testifies to Paul's journey from Rome to Spain. Eusebius (263–349) writes of two imprisonments and Paul's final martyrdom. Chrysostom (d. 407) and Jerome (347–420) add their witness.<sup>325</sup>

Providentially, Paul was released about the year 63 and left Rome for Spain, the scenes of his previous ministry, the large island of Crete and the Lycus Valley. He sought to cover the empire through his ministry. He was now “Paul the aged” (Phlm. 9), worn and tired, yet still filled with that burning zeal and drive which had characterized his life and ministry.

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<sup>323</sup> Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, p. 740.

<sup>324</sup> Tit. 1:5, ἀπέλιπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, a clear statement that Paul left Titus behind in Crete while he had moved on.

<sup>325</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 738–740 for the writings of Clement, Eusebius, Chrysostom and Jerome.

The Fire in Rome, Nero's Death  
and Paul's Martyrdom (68)

In the spring of 64, Nero set Rome on fire. He envisioned a greater, magnificent city, *Neropolis*, to be rebuilt upon the ashes. Five of the seven districts of the city were demolished by flames.

To cover himself, Nero had the Christians charged as incendiaries. As Christians were now a distinct religious entity, perhaps not yet as numerous as the Jews or other national and religious groups, because of their religious and moral distinctives and ability to suffer, he could expect no great rebellion or uprising either in Rome or throughout the empire.

For the first time Christianity was identified, not as a mere sect within Judaism and therefore protected as a *religio licita*, but as a distinct religious entity. Rome thus, for the first time, branded Christianity as a *religio illicita*. The first Roman persecution of Christianity had begun.

The horrors of the Neronian persecution have been preserved in history. He had Christians arrested, imprisoned, tortured, and massacred. He had them savaged by wild beasts, or wrapped in rags, dipped in pitch and hung on poles, then set afire as human torches for his entertainment.

Note: This was the first Roman state persecution. It would be followed by many others through the first three centuries of Christianity. Christianity continues to be persecuted through modern times by secularists, atheists, Communists, Muslims and others. *The Australian Church Record* for June, 1987, citing David Barrett, claimed that at that time [1987], 330,000 Christians were annually martyred each year.<sup>326</sup>

His violent insanity was now at its height. Christians throughout the empire were in danger. Paul, as its most well-known or notorious leader, was now a prime suspect. Nero had heard the gospel during Paul's trial. At some point, Paul was arrested and returned to Rome. Only Divine providence and his Roman citizenship preserved him from such torture.

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<sup>326</sup> Cited in D. A. Carson, et. al., *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 380.

Once again Paul was imprisoned at Rome, sometime in the year 67. This time, however, his being a leader of the Christians was a capital crime. He was probably tried by the imperial assessors and not by Nero, as they handled most of the cases during the final few years of Nero's reign.

At his first hearing, everyone forsook him, but he prayed that such would not be laid to their charge (2 Tim. 1:15–18). He would spend almost a year incarcerated before his martyrdom. His time would be spent in prayer, studying, writing and sending his companions to the various churches. A faithful, consistent ministry was more important to Paul than life itself (2 Tim. 4:1–13).

Only Luke remained with him. Demas, who had previously been faithful, apostatized from the faith. How deep this hurt must have been. They had prayed and labored together, and now he made a decided departure, loving this age, but not that to come.<sup>327</sup>

Paul asked Timothy to come to him, and to bring John Mark. He wanted his cloak because of the winter cold and his books, but especially the parchments, i.e., the scrolls of Scripture. (Some think the parchments were the original copies of his own writings). Everything was sanctified for the sake of Christ and the ministry to which Paul had been called.

The insane, immoral, dissolute Nero died June 9, in the year 68. The government was in rebellion, there were battles between Roman armies and generals. Some wanted to restore the Republic. Galba, the Procurator of Spain, was put forth as a rival emperor. The Roman Senate was divided, as Nero was the last of the Julio–Claudian dynasty. The Prefect of the Praetorian Guard finally abandoned him. Nero was ultimately declared a public enemy and fled from Rome to the estate of a friend. Unable to take his own life, he had his private secretary stab him, and he bled to death.

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<sup>327</sup> 2 Tim. 4:10, Δημᾶς γάρ με ἐγκατέλιπεν ἀγαπήσας τὸν νῦν αἰῶνα. There came a point in time when Demas had to choose, and he chose the present age [the “now” age] and revealed his apostasy.



Paul was probably executed just before Nero died, in the spring of 68. As a Roman citizen, he was probably beheaded. Tradition states that he was taken outside the walls of Rome on the Ostian road either one mile or to the three mile marker and beheaded with a sword.<sup>328</sup>

He had remained true to the faith, to the ministry to which God had called him, and to his Lord and Savior, to whom he had always been a faithful, humble bonds slave. His epitaph, 2 Timothy 4:6–7, as given at the beginning of this brief study, is here repeated in the form of a paraphrase from the original language, taking into account the emphatic position and use of the perfect tense:

For I am now ready to be offered [my life—blood poured out as a libation] and the time to finally pull up stakes is at hand. The good fight I have fought without slacking up to the very last, *my* course I have finished without flagging, the faith I have kept without compromise.<sup>329</sup>

Thus died Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles, alone on the side of a Roman road, probably taken by two Roman lictors and two guards. Executed in obscurity and leaving no burial marker or headstone. Some Christians may have secretly come later and taken the body to the catacombs.

But this is not how history and we who are Christians remember him. We see him on the road to Damascus, falling in blindness and awe before the risen and glorified Son of God, and rising in newness of life as His bonds slave and faithful Apostle. We read of him later caught up into the third heaven to see things which he could never speak of, but which gave him such a grasp of heaven and eternity that he never valued his life over the truth. All of his suffering was nothing compared to the anticipation of eternal glory.

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<sup>328</sup> See Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, pp. 781–783.

<sup>329</sup> 2 Tim. 4:6–7, Ἐγὼ γὰρ ἤδη σπένδομαι, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ἀναλύσεώς μου ἐφέστηκεν. τὸν καλὸν ἀγῶνα ἠγωνίσμαι, τὸν δρόμον τετέλεκα, τὴν πίστιν τετήρηκα.

We see him beaten, bloody and imprisoned at Philippi for the sake of the gospel, joyfully singing Psalms at midnight. We envision him before the philosophical council at Athens at the apex of his power as an orator, proclaiming a Theistic Christian World—and-Life View. We realize through reading his writings and his addresses that he never met his intellectual or even his spiritual equal from the time of his conversion to his death. He alone could and did rightly and publicly rebuke the great Apostle Peter.

We trace him on that short voyage from Troas to Neapolis, knowing that through this two-day trip, he opened Europe to the gospel and changed the history of Western Civilization and the world.

We read of the incomparable miracles God did through him at Ephesus. We read of his love, compassion and tears for his converts and fellow-believers. We hear him as he stands before thousands at Jerusalem, and before governors and kings, giving his testimony and defending the faith. We see him take moral command of a large ship and everyone in it by his testimony.

In our minds, we visualize Paul standing before the Imperial Court, facing Nero, the Roman Senators and the heads of the Praetorian Guard, declaring the truth of the gospel—faithful to the very last. Death held no terror; it was only the means of his “pulling up stakes and with Christ to be, which was ‘much more better.’”<sup>330</sup>

It is not how or where we die, but how we live and then how we die that truly counts for us as believers. We may not have any choice or say as to the former, but we do and must over the latter. May we be able to say in all truth with Paul, “For to me to live—Christ, and to die—gain.”<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Phil. 1:20–23. v. 23, συνέχομαι γὰρ ἐκ τῶν δύο τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔχων εἰς τὸ ἀναλῦσαι καὶ σὺν Χριστῷ εἶναι πολλῶ μᾶλλον κρεῖσσον·

<sup>331</sup> Phil. 1:21, Ἐμοὶ γὰρ τὸ ζῆν Χριστὸς καὶ τὸ ἀποθανεῖν κέρδος. This sentence has no verbs; it is an ellipsis for dramatic emphasis.

## Part IV

### The Nature, Order and Arrangement of the Pauline Corpus

#### Introduction

Biblical literature stands unique as the inscripturation of Divine revelation. The Scriptures are inspired, inerrant and self-authenticating. The books of the New Testament reveal the fulfillment of the Divine purpose and prophecies revealed and anticipated in the Old. The Two Testaments, as Divine revelation, contain respectively the Old and New Covenants. The New or Gospel Covenant is revealed historically [Matthew–Acts], didactically [the Pauline and General Epistles] and apocalyptically [The Book of Revelation]. These stand in stark contrast to the literature of all other world religions.

The four Gospels are the historical record of the incarnation, birth, earthly life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God. Each is written with a distinct emphasis, and together comprise a composite portrait of our Lord's earthly life and ministry. Acts records our Lord's ascension into heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the resultant spread of the gospel.

After the Book of Acts, the Pauline corpus forms the center of the New Testament canon. These thirteen epistles consist of letters which are largely personal or ecclesiological, i.e., written to either individuals or churches, and deal with the practicalities of Christian doctrine, experience and church life.

Then follow the General Epistles, also in the form of letters, and finally, the Book of Revelation, which completes the inspired canon. The whole is arranged in an organized development.<sup>332</sup> Note that, as the order stands in our Bible, the Pauline corpus begins with Romans, the major doctrinal treatise [although in the form of a letter] to the church at Rome. The General Epistles also

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<sup>332</sup> Both the Old and New Testaments are organized according to a given order which is not chronological, but topical. The Old: Law, Prophets and Writings; the New: the Gospels, Epistles and Revelation.

begin with a major doctrinal treatise—Hebrews [in the form of a general letter] to Jewish Christians. The following charts<sup>333</sup> enable the reader to grasp the essentials of the New Testament books:

The first chart gives the various books in chronological order with their authors, dates, provenance and destinations.

| Book            | Author    | Date <sup>334</sup>                       | Provenance        | Recipients                          |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| James           | James     | 44–46                                     | Jerusalem         | Jewish Christians of the Diaspora   |
| Galatians       | Paul      | 49–50<br>After First Missionary Journey   | Antioch in Syria? | Christians in Southern Galatia      |
| 1 Thessalonians | Paul      | 52<br>During Second Missionary Journey    | Corinth           | Christians in Thessalonica          |
| 2 Thessalonians | Paul      | 52–53<br>During Second Missionary Journey | Corinth           | Christians in Thessalonica          |
| Mark            | John Mark | 50–55                                     | Rome              | Non-Christian Romans; new converts. |
| 1 Corinthians   | Paul      | 56<br>During Third Missionary Journey     | Ephesus           | Christians in Corinth               |

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<sup>333</sup> These two charts are adapted from Vol. III of this *Survey of the Bible*.

<sup>334</sup> The dates of the various New Testament writings are approximate.

| Book          | Author  | Date                                              | Provenance                       | Recipients                                                                   |
|---------------|---------|---------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 Corinthians | Paul    | 57<br>During<br>Third<br>Missionary<br>Journey    | Macedonia                        | Christians in<br>Corinth                                                     |
| Romans        | Paul    | 57–58<br>During<br>Third<br>Missionary<br>Journey | Corinth<br>The house of<br>Gaius | Christians in<br>Rome                                                        |
| Matthew       | Matthew | 60–66                                             | Probably<br>Antioch in<br>Syria  | Jewish<br>Christians in<br>Syria or<br>Palestine                             |
| Luke          | Luke    | 58–61                                             | Caesarea or<br>Rome              | Theophilus                                                                   |
| Colossians    | Paul    | 62                                                | Rome                             | Christians in<br>Colossae                                                    |
| Ephesians     | Paul    | 62                                                | Rome                             | Christians in<br>the region<br>around<br>Ephesus                             |
| Philemon      | Paul    | 62                                                | Rome                             | Philemon,<br>his family,<br>and the<br>church in his<br>house at<br>Colossae |
| Philippians   | Paul    | 63                                                | Rome                             | Christians in<br>Philippi                                                    |
| Acts          | Luke    | 63                                                | Rome                             | Theophilus                                                                   |
| 1 Timothy     | Paul    | 64                                                | Macedonia                        | Timothy in<br>Ephesus                                                        |
| Titus         | Paul    | 63–64                                             | Nicopolis? <sup>335</sup>        | Titus in<br>Crete                                                            |

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<sup>335</sup> Paul probably had not reached Nicopolis at that time. See pp. 373–374.

|            |       |                       |                              |                                                 |
|------------|-------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Hebrews    | Paul  | 64–66                 | Unknown                      | Jewish Christians in Rome or Jerusalem          |
| 1 Peter    | Peter | 64–68                 | Rome?                        | Jewish Christians in Asia Minor                 |
| 2 Peter    | Peter | 64–68                 | Rome or Babylon              | Jewish Christians in Asia Minor                 |
| Jude       | Jude  | 67–68                 | Unknown                      | Christians in general                           |
| 2 Timothy  | Paul  | 67                    | Rome                         | Timothy in Ephesus                              |
| John       | John  | 64?–98 <sup>336</sup> | Ephesus                      | Christians in the region around Ephesus         |
| 1 John     | John  | 95–96                 | Ephesus                      | Christians in the region around Ephesus         |
| 2 John     | John  | 97                    | Ephesus                      | A Church near Ephesus                           |
| 3 John     | John  | 97                    | Ephesus                      | Gaius, a Christian in the region around Ephesus |
| Revelation | John  | 98                    | Isle of Patmos<br>Asia Minor | Seven churches in Western Asia Minor            |

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<sup>336</sup> The traditional dating for the Johannine writings is the mid to late nineties of the first century. Some recent scholars would place all the New Testament writings before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

This second chart gives the traditional order and structure of the New Testament according to its genre and doctrinal emphasis:

| Genre & Structure                                      | Book            | Doctrinal Emphasis & Predominant Theme            |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Four Gospels<br>Historical                             | Matthew         | Jesus Christ as King and Promised Messiah         |
|                                                        | Mark            | Jesus Christ as The Servant                       |
|                                                        | Luke            | Jesus Christ as the Son of Man                    |
|                                                        | John            | Jesus Christ as the Son of God                    |
| Historical                                             | Acts            | The Building of the Churches                      |
| Pauline Epistles:<br>Letters to Churches & Individuals | Romans          | Salvation: Doctrinal, historical and Experiential |
|                                                        | 1 Corinthians   | Corrections in Christian Conduct                  |
|                                                        | 2 Corinthians   | Portrayal of the Christian Ministry               |
|                                                        | Galatians       | The Implications of Justification by Faith        |
|                                                        | Ephesians       | The Believer's Position in Christ                 |
|                                                        | Philippians     | The Believer's attitude in Christ                 |
|                                                        | Colossians      | The Believer's Completeness in Christ             |
|                                                        | 1 Thessalonians | The Second Coming Described                       |
|                                                        | 2 Thessalonians | The Second Coming Clarified                       |
|                                                        | 1 Timothy       | Conduct in the House of God                       |
|                                                        | 2 Timothy       | The Final Charge of Paul to Timothy               |

|                  |                        |                                                          |
|------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | Titus                  | The Need for Sound Doctrine and Good Works               |
|                  | Philemon               | A Personal Favor Requested                               |
| General Epistles | Hebrews <sup>337</sup> | The Superiority of Christ                                |
|                  | James                  | The Need for Good Works as the Evidence of Genuine Faith |
|                  | 1 Peter                | The Conduct and Joy of Christian Suffering               |
|                  | 2 Peter                | The Certainty of the Gospel and the Day of the Lord      |
|                  | 1, 2, 3 John           | The Way of Fellowship and Genuine Faith                  |
|                  | Jude                   | Warning concerning False Teachers                        |
| Apocalyptic      | Revelation             | The Divine Redemptive Program                            |

### The Nature of the Pauline Corpus

More than three-fourths of the New Testament books are in the form of letters. Not only the Epistles, but even the Gospel according to Luke and the Book of Acts were epistles sent to Theophilus. As Christianity is to be proclaimed through preaching, it is fitting that its teachings be given in the manner of personal address through letters. “This characteristic is the unique glory of the New Testament.”<sup>338</sup>

As with the other books of the New Testament, the writings of the Apostle Paul are in the form of letters, as opposed to

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<sup>337</sup> The author would include Hebrews, although a general epistle, within the Pauline corpus.

<sup>338</sup> D. Edmond Hiebert, *An Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, p. 13.



formal theological treatises.<sup>339</sup> Even Romans and Hebrews, the most orderly, reasoned and theological, and the closest to being such, are yet letters, and retain a personal, emotional and historical character. This Divinely-inspired correspondence, written informally with immediate issues and concerns at the fore; manifesting emotion, conviction, apostolic authority and love in a personal manner, are the chosen vehicle for doctrinal and practical teaching for the centuries. This gives them their unique character. Consider the words of Farrar:

In this respect the records of Christianity are absolutely unique in the religious history of the world. Of all the sacred books which the world has seen there is not one which is composed mainly, or at all, of letters, with the single exception of the New Testament. The...[sacred books]...of the world—the Vedas, the Zend Avesta, the Tripitaka, the Qu'ran, and the writings of Confucius—are poems, or rhythmic addresses, or legendary histories, or philosophic discourses. In this, as in all other respects, the ways of God's providence differ from man's expectations. We may thank God that we derive some of the deepest truths of our belief from documents so simple, so individual, so full of human interest and love—written, most of them, in a style the most personal that ever existed.<sup>340</sup>

This use of personal correspondence may also be contrasted with the Old Testament, which contains many formal declarations in addition to historical narrative (e.g., The Decalogue, Ex. 20:1–17) and the “Former Prophets” or historical books [Joshua–Nehemiah]. The New Covenant not only fulfills the Old, but reveals the grace and loving kindness of God to a greater degree and in a much more personal way—living letters from the living God concerning the living Christ and the life which must be lived for Him both individually and in the context of the local assembly.

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<sup>339</sup> This work uses the terms “letters” and “epistles” synonymously when referring to the New Testament Epistles. Adolf Deissmann may have made too much of a distinction between letters and epistles. See *Light from the Ancient East*, pp. 228–245.

<sup>340</sup> F. W. Farrar, *Messages of the Books*, pp. 143–144, as quoted by W. Graham Scroggie, *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*, III, p. 5.

Letters have a three-fold advantage over a treatise or other formal writing: first, they admit of a freer handling of a subject; second, the individuality of the writers finds fuller expression; and third, ampler use can be made of the actual circumstances of the reader. We discern all these advantages in the letters of the New Testament.<sup>341</sup>

The Pauline Epistles follow the accepted and common form of the correspondence of their day. We find a salutation, an introduction, the main body of the letter—most of which can be divided into the doctrinal then the practical—and a conclusion with closing information and greetings, often including the provenance, the name of the amenuensis and Paul's own signature (e.g., Rom. 16:21–24; 1 Cor. 16:19–20; 2 Cor. 16:11–14; Eph. 6:21–24; Phil. 4:20–23; Col. 4:12–18; 1 Thess. 5:26–28, etc.).

Note: Paul evidently wrote his first letter, to the Galatians, himself. He was evidently already suffering from reoccurring *ophthalmia* (Gal. 4:16; 6:11). His working the *cilicium* may have also stiffened his fingers, making writing difficult. Later, he often used an amenuensis due to his ocular disease and probable manual difficulties with arthritis or stiffened fingers. He always included his own scrawled signature, as there seemed to be spurious letters circulated claiming his authorship (2 Thess. 2:2).

Are these the only letters the Apostle wrote? Evidently not. He may have written many letters to both individuals and churches during his ministry, which was increasingly dependent upon correspondence carried to their destination by his associates (1 Cor. 5:9; 2 Cor. 11:28; Phil. 4:10–16). Providentially, only these canonical letters remain preserved. As forming a distinct corpus or body of inspired truth, they have proven sufficient for centuries for both our faith [what we are to believe] and practice [how we are to live]. We must remember that these are Divinely-inspired, thus, behind the human author is the Holy Spirit.<sup>342</sup> It was God Himself who chose this method of communicating and preserving His truth.

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<sup>341</sup> W. Graham Scroggie, *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>342</sup> See 2 Tim. 3:16–17; 2 Pet. 1:20–21; 3:15–16.

The Pauline corpus is, by itself, a rich compendium of Divine truth, a complete and robust systematic theology, presented in doctrinal and practical aspects—never merely theoretical—Theology Proper, or the Doctrine of God, Christology, Pneumatology, Hamartiology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology and Eschatology. “The Pauline Epistles form one of the inestimable treasures of the Christian Church.”<sup>343</sup>

### Excursus: Biblical Criticism

With the rise of rationalistic “Destructive Higher Criticism,” the Pauline letters have been divided into two groups: “undisputed” [undisputed Pauline authorship] and “disputed” [completely or partially written by another author]. Those which are considered “undisputed” are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. Those considered “disputed” for various reasons: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus.<sup>344</sup>

#### Biblical Criticism: Definition and Description

This necessitates a short discussion of Biblical Criticism for several reasons: first, the student or reader should not remain ignorant of any significant controversy pertaining to the books of the Bible. Second, many critical commentaries devote much space to discussions concerning biblical criticism. Third, one can often judge a given commentary by its approach to Scripture. Some commentaries or surveys are tainted with faulty or rationalistic presuppositions. This is especially true in Old Testament studies,<sup>345</sup> and to a given degree in the New. The student and reader must read with discernment. Unless some critical commentaries are worthwhile for textual research, they

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<sup>343</sup> Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>344</sup> The authorship of Hebrews has been questioned since the time of the Reformers due to writing style, and is not considered in this list.

<sup>345</sup> For a general discussion of “destructive” Higher Criticism, with its effect on the Old Testament, see Vol. I, pp. 67–75 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

are a poor investment. The remarks in this excursus pertain to the New Testament.

Biblical Criticism<sup>346</sup> is a department of Exegetical Theology. It is comprised of two branches: Textual and Historical Criticism. These are also termed “Lower” and “Higher” Criticism because the latter is founded and dependent upon the former.

Textual or “Lower” Criticism (being first and foundational) is an integral part of establishing the text of Scripture. This may be necessary due to variant readings in the many existing manuscripts in the Greek and in the several ancient versions.

Historical or “Higher” Criticism (based upon the results of Textual Criticism) seeks to establish the genuineness and authenticity—authorship, date and historicity—of any given biblical document through both internal and external evidence. Internal evidence includes whatever might be in the text of the document itself, e.g., claims to authorship, historical data and circumstances, doctrinal emphases, a distinct writing style, etc., existing in the text. External evidence may be derived from other biblical documents, parallel passages in other documents, historical incidents, the writings of the early Church Fathers, religious tradition, that corroborate the given document, etc.

Note: The term “Higher Criticism” has been traditionally used by Fundamentalists and some Evangelicals in a very narrow and negative sense as pertaining solely to the rationalistic attempt to destroy the validity and authority of Scripture. It is held to be synonymous with “*Destructive* Higher Criticism” [a radical, rationalistic historico-critical approach], which denies the supernatural, Divine inspiration and miracles, etc., and thus undermines any historical and doctrinal validity to the Scriptures. Thus, the legitimate science of Biblical Criticism has largely been lost or misunderstood by many.

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<sup>346</sup> “Criticism” derives from the Gk: κριτής, a judge. Cf. Heb. 4:12, “For the word of God *is*...a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” “Discerner” is κριτικὸς, or “critic, judge.” A biblical critic is one who approaches the Scriptures with judgment, or uses judgment, i.e., investigates the Scripture.

### The Necessity of Biblical Criticism

Biblical Criticism is a necessary theological science which deals with both the text of Scripture and with the essential aspects [genuineness and authenticity] of each biblical document. Biblical Criticism is necessary for various reasons. The autograph copies (the original, inspired documents hand-written by the inspired writers themselves or through amanuenses) have long since disappeared.<sup>347</sup> What remain are copies—and probably much later copies of copies. Aside from some papyri fragments, the oldest extant New Testament Greek mss.<sup>348</sup> are in codex form and date no earlier than about the late third or early fourth century.<sup>349</sup> Some papyrus fragments, however, date from the first century.

The early churches and councils had to engage in Biblical Criticism in the process of *recognizing* the canon of Scripture. Thus, even in the early churches, Biblical Criticism included the text of Scripture itself, internal and external evidences, its doctrinal content, use or modifications by heretics, separation from other extant contemporary Christian literature, its place in religious society and use by the churches, a close and discerning investigation of the writings of the early Church Fathers and their use of scriptural texts, etc.

Biblical Criticism provides the available means and process to help ascertain the genuineness of the document, e.g., the Epistle of 2 Peter and the Book of Revelation were the final biblical books to be fully recognized as canonical because of textual difficulties and the question of genuineness in the early churches. The authorship of

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<sup>347</sup> The “original mss.” are not identical with the “original Greek,” which refers to the language, not the mss. We possess the latter, not the former.

<sup>348</sup> Manuscripts are hand-written documents. The abbreviations are “ms,” manuscript, and mss., manuscripts, plural. These abbreviations are used for the remainder of this section.

<sup>349</sup> The codex is the book form with leaves or pages rather than continuous scrolls, a practice not in vogue until about the third or fourth century AD. Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1947–1956), the oldest Hebrew Old Testament mss. were dated about 1100 AD.

the Epistle to the Hebrews is still an open question with many.<sup>350</sup> The debate over the genuineness of 1 John 5:7–8 continues to foment to this day.<sup>351</sup>

Archeological discoveries shed light upon the history of ancient peoples and their writings, and thus upon the history detailed in Scripture. Although such “evidences” do not “prove” the Scriptures to be true,<sup>352</sup> they may help in shedding light upon past events, customs, practices and thus various uses of words, terminology and language which help in understanding the text,<sup>353</sup> the times in which a given writer lived, or the various issues, places and even prophecies about which he wrote. Such evidence is incorporated into the study of Scripture by the use of Biblical Criticism.

Throughout both Jewish and Christian history, Biblical Criticism has existed in one form or another. Among the Jews,

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<sup>350</sup> The Pauline tradition dates to about the third century, but Paul’s name does not occur in the document, and the style is quite different from that of his other writings. The subscript of the *Stephanus Text*, (13:25b) [πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐγράφη ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας διὰ Τιμοθέου] varies in some mss. and is open to various interpretations. Internal evidence suggests Pauline authorship [e.g., 10:33–34; 13:18–19, 23–24].

<sup>351</sup> Although occurring in some ancient versions, no Greek text contained the passage. Erasmus thus left it out of his 1516 Greek Testament. The Romanists objected. He stated that he would include it if they could produce a Greek ms. which contained it. The passage was dubiously found in a sixteenth century [contemporary] Greek ms. of questionable origin. Thus, it was later inserted by Erasmus and eventually found its way into the *Stephanus Text* (1550), and into the KJV.

<sup>352</sup> The truth of Scripture, i.e., its self-authenticating nature, is vouchsafed to the mind and heart by the Holy Spirit; it is not proven by various evidences, as though the lesser could “prove” the greater.

<sup>353</sup> The rich source for such investigation, which has greatly and positively affected the study of New Testament Greek and Textual Criticism has been such items as the *papyri* (primitive paper made from papyrus, and found in the form of personal correspondence, documents, etc.), *ostraca* (pottery shards with writing on them) and inscriptions (public documents) of the first three centuries AD.

textual criticism was a necessary exercise from the use of the LXX (c. 246 BC), the *Targumim* [Chaldean or Aramaic paraphrases of the Hebrew text] and Talmudic writings (c. 200 AD—). From the very beginnings of historic Christianity, Biblical Criticism has been with us in one form or another as a necessary science.<sup>354</sup>

### Variant Readings

Many of the biblical documents which we possess in the original languages have differences in the reading of their texts [variant readings]. This is understandable, given the intervening centuries, the hand-copying of mss. until the advent of printing in the fifteen century, the thousands of existing copies,<sup>355</sup> the lack of supervision in copying New Testament passages,<sup>356</sup> ancient translations and versions, heretical translations and versions,<sup>357</sup> Scriptures either quoted or paraphrased in personal correspondence or for use in worship [*lectionaries* or *pericopes*], etc.

Through an exacting process, the attempt is made to sort out the original reading. If there is a questionable issue due to several readings which may be valid, then a list is drawn on a descending scale as to which reading carries the most weight or seems to fit grammatically, syntactically, historically, doctrinally or according to the author's style, etc. A list of such readings usually occurs in the critical apparatus at the bottom of the given page of a critical Greek Testament.<sup>358</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> For a thorough discussion of Biblical Criticism, see Vol. III, pp. 36–49 of this *Survey of the Bible*.

<sup>355</sup> There are approximately 5,000 extant copies of the Greek Testament.

<sup>356</sup> The Hebrew text was under scribal control and care, and so contains few variants. There was no control over the copying of New Testament mss. in early Christianity.

<sup>357</sup> E.g., Marcion, a Gnostic heretic, made his translation of parts of Paul's epistles, severely editing them (140–160 AD).

<sup>358</sup> The critical apparatus is a listing of variant readings and remarks at the bottom of the page in the Greek New Testament. For a full discussion and comments upon each variant reading, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*.

Variant readings usually follow a given pattern, i.e., they may often be traced through various succeeding copies. For instance, if a given reading [a transposed letter, different wording—ending, word, etc.] found its way into a given copy, two common things might occur: first, subsequent copies would carry this reading, and, possibly, if the wording were awkward, ungrammatical or doctrinally questionable, a subsequent copyist might change it or put an alternate reading in the margin. There are errors of the eye and errors of the ear. At times these marginal readings allegedly crept into the text. There was often no limitation, supervision or scrutiny in copying the New Testament. Quotations, paraphrases or general references occur in personal letters and in the writings of the early Christian writers. The pattern of variant readings has resulted in various text “families,” i.e., patterns traceable geographically and historically through subsequent copies and textual variants.

The following quotations give a clear picture of the state of the Greek text of the New Testament, enabling us to state that we have almost without the slightest doubt, the original text [of the autograph copies] of the New Testament.

...if we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must...declare it to be marvelously correct...such has been the providence of God in preserving for His Church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that not only is the New Testament unrivalled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use, but also in the abundance of testimony which has come down to us for castigating its comparatively infrequent blemishes...Its wonderful approximation to its autograph is the undisguised envy of every modern reader of ancient books....

...Dr. Ezra Abbot was accustomed to say that about 19/20 of them [variant readings] have so little support that, although they are various readings, no one would think of them as rival readings; and 19/20 of the remainder are of so little importance that their adoption or rejection would cause no appreciable difference in the sense of the passages in which they occur. Dr. Hort's way of stating it is that upon one word in every eight various readings exist supported by sufficient evidence to bid us pause and look at it; that about one word in sixty has various



readings upon it supported by such evidence as to render our decision nice and difficult; but that so many of these variations are trivial that about only one word in every thousand has upon it substantial variation supported by such evidence as to call out the efforts of the critic in deciding between the readings.

....The great mass of the New Testament, in other words, has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no variation...<sup>359</sup>

Commenting on the Words of Hort above, as related by Warfield, Geisler and Nix state, “Mathematically, this would compute to a text that is 98.33 percent pure.” They then refer to the statement by A. T. Robertson that the real concern of textual criticism is of a “thousandth part of the entire text.” “This would make the reconstructed text of the New Testament 99.9 percent free from substantial or consequential error.”<sup>360</sup> Phillip Schaff, the astute church historian and scholar, stated

...of the [thousands of] variations only about 400 affect the sense; and of these 400 only about 50 are of real significance for one reason or another, and, again, not one of these 50 ‘affect an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages, or by the whole tenor of Scripture teaching.’<sup>361</sup>

Thus, we possess the complete Greek New Testament text with only a few minor considerations in the variant readings. These may be studied in the critical apparatus.

#### *The Textus Receptus*

The first printed Greek New Testament was that of Erasmus in 1516. Erasmus collected Greek mss. of the books of the New Testament until he had sufficient to complete almost all of the New Testament. Lacking the last verses of the Book of Revelation, he translated the text from the *Latin Vulgate* into Greek to complete

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<sup>359</sup> B. B. Warfield, *Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, pp. 12–14.

<sup>360</sup> Geisler and Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 365–366.

<sup>361</sup> H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, p. 280.

the work.<sup>362</sup> This eclectic text became the basis for the *Stephanus Text* of 1550, and was the text which served as a basis for the *King James Version* of 1611.<sup>363</sup> This text was later edited again with emendations from Beza's Greek text and in 1633 was described in its publication as "the text received by all," hence the idea of the *Textus Receptus*.

Note: Theodore Beza (1519–1605), the successor to John Calvin at Geneva, published several editions of the Greek New Testament between 1565 and 1604, using the *Stephanus Text* of Robert Estienne [*Robertus Stephanus*] with a few alterations. The Elzevir Brothers, printers at Leiden and Amsterdam, used Beza's text of the 1565 edition for two printings.

The 1633 edition became the so-called "Received Text" [TR]. The designation *textus receptus* was taken from the words of the preface: *Textum ergo habes nunc ab omnibus receptum in quo nihil immutatum aut corruptum damus*, i.e., "Therefore you now have the text received by all, in which we give nothing changed or corrupted. Thus, the King James Version, 1611, was *not* based on the *Textus Receptus*, as it predated the TR by twenty-two years.

The facts of history plainly reveal that the so-called *Textus Receptus* is itself an eclectic text. It was *the* "critical text" of its day, i.e., the best which then contemporary scholarship could produce from the best available sources. It was not a mysterious, perpetual or "preserved" text which had been kept "pure" for many centuries. This fact, of course, is lost on those whose ignorance of history,

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<sup>362</sup> Erasmus translated from the Latin Vulgate into Greek several passages from Revelation, including the final six verses. For a full discussion of Erasmus' Greek Testament, see Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968. pp. 98–103.

<sup>363</sup> An eclectic text is a text selected from various sources. Erasmus collected almost enough Greek mss. to complete the New Testament, but had to translate the final verses of Revelation from the Latin into the Greek. The so-called *Textus Receptus*, as Erasmus' Greek New Testament (c. 1516), and the *Stephanus Text* (c. 1550) before it, was an eclectic text with a critical apparatus containing variant readings.

superstition, and lack of any knowledge of the original languages, cause them to refuse to even consider this.

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## The Order and Arrangement of the Pauline Corpus

Essentially, there are but two orders of Paul's Epistles: the chronological order in which they were written and the topical or canonical order in which they occur in our Bible with their groupings according to various distinctives. Both deserve consideration.

The chronological order emphasizes the Apostle's progression of thought and reflects his varied circumstances and the current issues among the churches. During his traveling and preaching ministry, he emphasized the more practical concerns. During his imprisonment at Rome, he had time to reflect and meditate on the richness and glory of God's grace in the context of both time and eternity. In his final journeys between his imprisonments, his concerns were pastoral as he counseled Timothy and Titus. Chronologically, Paul's Epistles may be arranged in a five-fold manner:

| <b>The Chronological Order, Time-Frame and Characteristics</b> |                                          |                                                |                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Group                                                          | Epistles                                 | Time-Frame                                     | Characteristics |
| I                                                              | Galatians                                | Before Second Missionary Journey<br>(c. 49–50) | Soteriological  |
| II                                                             | 1<br>Thessalonians<br>2<br>Thessalonians | Second Missionary Journey<br>(c. 52–53)        | Eschatological  |
| III                                                            | 1 Corinthians<br>2 Corinthians<br>Romans | Third Missionary Journey<br>(c. 56–57)         | Soteriological  |
| IV                                                             | Colossians<br>Ephesians<br>Philemon      | First Imprisonment<br>(c. 62–63)               | Christological  |

|   |             |                                  |                                      |
|---|-------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
|   | Philippians | “The Prison Epistles”            |                                      |
|   | Hebrews?    | Between Imprisonments            | Christological                       |
| V | 1 Timothy   | Between Imprisonments (c. 63–64) | Ecclesiological: “Pastoral Epistles” |
|   | Titus       | Between Imprisonments (c. 63–64) |                                      |
|   | 2 Timothy   | Final Imprisonment (c. 67–68)    |                                      |

The canonical order, though discounted by some scholars, has a certain pattern of arrangement which is instructive. These epistles may be arranged in four groups, according to their emphasis or key-theme:

| <b>Classification of the Pauline Epistles</b> |                                                       |                                                               |                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Group I                                       | Group II                                              | Group III                                                     | Group IV                        |
| 1<br>Thessalonians<br>2<br>Thessalonians      | 1 Corinthians<br>2 Corinthians<br>Galatians<br>Romans | Ephesians<br>Philippians<br>Colossians<br>Philemon<br>Hebrews | 1 Timothy<br>2 Timothy<br>Titus |
| Christian Hope                                | Christian Faith                                       | Christian Love                                                | Christian Order                 |
| Christ & His Coming                           | Christ & His Cross                                    | Christ & His Church                                           | Christ & the Congregation       |
| Consolation                                   | Conflict                                              | Conquest                                                      | Consistency                     |
| Eschatological                                | Soteriological                                        | Christological                                                | Ecclesiological                 |

There are nine “Church Epistles,” i.e., letters to churches, one “General Epistle” [Hebrews] and four written to individuals [the “Pastoral Epistles” and Philemon]. In their canonical order,

we may mark the distinctive emphases of the nine “Church Epistles:”<sup>364</sup>

| The Church Epistles: Emphasis on the Gospel |                              |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Epistle                                     | Emphasis on the Gospel       |
| Romans                                      | The Gospel: Its Message      |
| 1 Corinthians                               | The Gospel: Its Ministry     |
| 2 Corinthians                               | The Gospel: Its Ministers    |
| Galatians                                   | The Gospel: Its Mutilations  |
| Ephesians                                   | The Gospel: & Eternity       |
| Philippians                                 | The Gospel: Its Practicality |
| Colossians                                  | The Gospel: & Philosophy     |
| 1 Thessalonians                             | The Gospel & the Future      |
| 2 Thessalonians                             | The Gospel & The Antichrist  |

| The Church Epistles: Emphasis on Union with Christ |                           |                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Epistle                                            | Emphasis on Christ        | Emphasis on Union with Christ   |
| Romans                                             | In Christ: Justification  | Christ the Power of God         |
| 1 Corinthians                                      | In Christ: Sanctification | Christ the Wisdom of God        |
| 2 Corinthians                                      | In Christ: Consolation    | Christ the Comfort of God       |
| Galatians                                          | In Christ: Liberation     | Christ the Righteousness of God |
| Ephesians                                          | In Christ: Exaltation     | Christ the Riches of God        |
| Philippians                                        | In Christ: Exultation     | Christ the Sufficiency of God   |
| Colossians                                         | In Christ: Completion     | Christ the Fullness of God      |

<sup>364</sup> The preceding charts in this section have been adapted and modified from the works of W. Graham Scroggie, J. Sidlow Baxter and D. Edmond Hiebert.

|                    |                         |                              |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1<br>Thessalonians | In Christ: Translation  | Christ the Promise of<br>God |
| 2<br>Thessalonians | In Christ: Compensation | Christ the Reward of<br>God  |

### Excursus: The New Perspective on Paul and the Federal Vision

The “New Perspective on Paul” [NPP] and the “Federal Vision” theology are two modern movements among some Reformed and Evangelical groups which necessitate some observations and comments for students of Pauline Theology. These movements are complex, and any short excursus such as this may result in an over simplification. The purpose is to give the student a very basic acquaintance with these movements. The reader should be aware that these have made inroads into areas of modern Reformed and Evangelical thought, have infected various doctrinal works, commentaries and paedobaptist churches,<sup>365</sup> and to varying degrees have influenced the thinking of many. These movements remain the main topic in Pauline studies, especially in the context of the Epistle to the Romans.

#### The New Perspective

The “New Perspective on Paul,”<sup>366</sup> which became an issue in the 1970s, was the culmination of over a century of studies in Pauline Theology and a subsequent departure from essential truths concerning soteriology and the ecclesiology. This movement began with an investigation of first century Judaism [“Second Temple Judaism”], concluding that it had been caricaturized by Lutherans and Reformers with their doctrine of a forensic justification by faith

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<sup>365</sup> The sacramental significance given to paedobaptism [*paedorhantism*, i.e., infant sprinkling] by Protestants, especially Presbyterians and some Episcopalians and Anglicans, has provided an entrance into such thinking.

<sup>366</sup> This term was coined by James D. G. Dunn, one of its leading advocates.

alone, contrasted with an alleged legalistic Judaism, which maintained a works–righteousness. The New Perspective also either minimizes or misunderstands the salvific significance of the cross and imputes to baptism the preeminent place scripturally given to regeneration and conversion.

Some nineteenth and twentieth century critics,<sup>367</sup> assuming a Jewish–Gentile division in early Christianity, and allegedly discerning that first century Judaism was not a works–righteousness religion, but a community of the faithful, stated that the Reformers and subsequent biblical interpreters had misinterpreted Paul.

Mark their thinking in the following: Paul was not converted on the Road to Damascus; he rather was given the call to include the Gentiles in the covenant people of God. The “law” in Paul’s writings was not merely the Moral Law or the Decalogue, but included circumcision, Sabbath and dietary laws—markers for Jewish covenant distinctiveness. In his letters, especially Galatians and Romans, Paul was not writing a polemic against a works–righteousness, but against a Jewish exclusiveness.

As the covenant–people of God was now to include the Gentiles, everything must be seen in the context of this covenant of grace [“covenantal nomism”], including the gospel, evangelism, baptism and justification. The “gospel” allegedly consists of community inclusion and Christ’s Lordship, not salvation. Baptism has been elevated by some within this movement to a generational sacrament [baptismal regeneration].

Justification is seen as essentially ecclesiastical [church or covenant–related] rather than soteriological [salvation–related]. Justification by faith is synonymous with justification by faithfulness, i.e., living in terms of the covenant, or one may become unjustified—the doctrine of an infused righteousness by an admixture of faith and works rather than an imputed righteousness. This is in reality a return to Rome.

Other major doctrines have been adversely affected. Baptism—neither regeneration nor conversion—marks one’s

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<sup>367</sup> Including Albert Schweitzer and F. C. Baur of the Tübingen School.

entrance into salvation and into the community of God's people. The imputation of the active obedience of Christ is denied.<sup>368</sup> Justification is largely eschatological rather than forensic. One may lose his justification and apostatize. Justification will only be assured and final at the resurrection and in the state of glory.

In a paper entitled "The Covenant Context for Evangelism," Dr. Norman Shepherd, one-time Chairman of the Department of Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, wrote:

The covenant affords the perspective from which the evangelistic task of the church ought to be approached... 1. The Great Commission arises out of and is patterned after the Covenant made with Abraham... 2. Reformed evangelistic methodology must be consciously oriented to the covenant of grace rather than to the doctrine of election... 3. Baptism rather than regeneration is the point of transition from lostness in death to salvation in life.<sup>369</sup>

Note: The major proponents of this view include: E. P. Sanders, Norman Shepherd, James D. G. Dunn, Heikki Räisänen and N. T. Wright. These men have furthered their influence through their articles, commentaries, books and lectures as authors and seminary professors.

### The "Federal Vision"

This new departure from orthodox and Reformed theology is closely related to "The New Perspective on Paul," and represents a radical departure from the biblical and historic doctrine of justification by faith alone. It was and is the appropriation of the principles of the "New Perspective" into the life of the churches. John M. Otis of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the U.S., a strong opponent of this movement, summarizes the Federal Vision:

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<sup>368</sup> For centuries theologians have held to both the active obedience [our Lord's impeccable life fulfilling the demands of the Law] and passive obedience [His sacrificial suffering and death which paid the Law's penalty vicarious for the elect] of Christ. His active and passive obedience provide the perfect righteousness before God which the Law demands, hence His righteousness is imputed to the believer [justification by faith alone], thus a forensic righteousness before the Moral Law.

<sup>369</sup> As quoted in *The Banner of Truth Magazine*, Issue 166–167, p. 60, Italics added.



The errors of the Federal Vision can be summarized as follows: Entrance into God's covenant is objective via our water baptism....The term "elect" applies corporately to those who are objectively in the covenant. Water baptism is the distinguishing mark of those who constitute the elect of God. Our water baptism, be it infant baptism or adult baptism, constitutes true union with Christ, meaning that we have all of the saving graces at our baptism. Since we are in genuine union with Christ at our baptism and since apostasy is a real warning in Scripture, those who renounce the Faith or who live rebellious lives with regard to God's commandments can lose their salvation. This means that one loses his initial justification.

There is a final justification that must be maintained by faithful obedience to God's Law throughout one's lifetime. Justification is seen in terms of "obedient faith" or as "faithfulness." Good works are not merely the genuine fruit or evidence of saving faith; [they are] seen as the essence of faith. We are justified by covenant faithfulness, and justification is progressive in the sense that we will be declared justified on the Day of Judgment as long as we did not apostatize during our lifetime.

The covenant of works is non-existent. Jesus' active obedience of His righteous keeping of the Law has nothing to do with the basis of our justification on the final Day of Judgment. Christ's obedience to the Law enabled Him to be the worthy, sinless, sacrifice, giving Him a right standing before God the Father so that union with Christ in His resurrected and glorified life is what is credited to us, not His meritorious works on our behalf.<sup>370</sup>

This system is an implicit denial of the redemptive and vicarious work of the cross, a forensic justification by faith alone, and the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus. Baptism actually and practically replaces grace. Further, and consistent with their system, the proponents of the Federal Vision Theology have instituted infant communion and hold to a corporate election rather than personal—at the least a semi-Pelagianism.

Note: The main proponents include: Norman Shepherd, N. T. Wright, James Wilkins, Douglas Wilson, John Barach, Peter Leithart, James B. Jordan, Rich Lusk and Steve Schlissel.

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<sup>370</sup> John M. Otis, *Danger in the Camp: An Analysis of the Heresies of the Federal Vision*, p. 29.

The student should be sufficiently familiar with the distinctives of these movements to discern the presence of their views in various commentaries, surveys and introductions. This is especially true in their commentaries on Galatians and Romans.

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## Part V

### An Introduction to and Analysis of The Pauline Epistles

#### Romans

#### Introduction

The Epistle to the Romans is Paul's *magnum opus*. It is the greatest, most comprehensive writing and single book in Scripture. It stands properly as the first among the Epistles of the New Testament, as its canonical position reveals. To master its contents and teaching is to become a well-instructed theologian. While not as profound and grammatically complex and intricate as Ephesians,<sup>371</sup> its clear reasoning and inclusive scope are masterful. Romans stands at the head of the Church and Personal Epistles as Hebrews stands at the head of the General Epistles.

#### Tributes to the Preeminence of Romans

Among the pages of accolades in various works, the following have been chosen: "The principal and most excellent part of the New Testament." (Wm. Tyndale). "The profoundest book in existence." (S. T. Coleridge). "The Cathedral of the Christian Faith." (D. Edmund Hiebert). "It contains...an abridgment of all that is contained in the Christian religion." (Robert Haldane). "...the expositor, who has attained to a true understanding of its contents, has the doors thrown open for entering into the deepest and the most hidden treasures of the Word of Truth." (John Calvin). "Paul's masterpiece." (J. L. Eason).

This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes. It is the true masterpiece of the New Testament. (Martin Luther).

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<sup>371</sup> See p. 300 for the intricate and complex statements in Ephesians.

“It is the most fundamental, vital, logical, profound and systematic discussion of the whole plan of salvation in all the literature of the world.” (B. H. Carroll). “The Epistle to the Romans has...played a more important and a more crucial part in the history of the church than an other single book in the whole Bible.” (D. M. Lloyd-Jones).

It is the most remarkable production of the most remarkable man. It is his heart. It contains his theology, theoretical and practical, for which he lived and died. It gives the clearest and fullest exposition of the doctrines of sin and grace and the best possible solution to the universal dominion of sin and death in the universal redemption by the Second Adam.<sup>372</sup>

There is one book in the New Testament which links up with almost everything that the Bible contains: that is the Epistle to the Romans....Paul brings together and sets out in systematic relation all the great themes of the Bible—sin, law, judgment, faith, works, grace, justification, sanctification, election, the plan of salvation, the work of Christ, the work of the Spirit, the Christian hope, the nature and life of the Church, the place of Jew and Gentile in the purpose of God, the philosophy of the Church and world history, the meaning and message of the Old Testament, the duties of Christian citizenship, the principles of personal piety and ethics. From the vantage-point given by Romans, the whole landscape of the Bible is open to view, and the starting-point for biblical interpretation and theology.

If Galatians has been called the *Magna Carta* of freedom from legalism, then Romans must be regarded as the Constitution of Biblical Christianity. It was not designed as a tract for sinners, but as a doctrinal treatise to expound the complexities of the faith (J. I. Packer).

John Chrysostom (c. 349–407), one of the great Church Fathers, thought that Romans was so remarkable that he had it read to him twice a week. Augustine (354–430) was converted through reading Rom. 13:13–14. Luther (1483–1546) was converted through reading Rom. 1:17. John Wesley (1703–1791) was converted through hearing a preacher reading from Luther’s commentary on Romans. Wherever and whenever revival has

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<sup>372</sup> Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, I, p. 766.

come to some part of the Christian world, the Epistle to the Romans has always had a significant part.

### Pauline Authorship

From the earliest Church Fathers, all orthodox Christians have held to the Pauline authorship of Romans. Internal evidence reveals the Pauline impress at every juncture and in every argument (see also: 1:1; 11:13; 15:15–20).

External evidence includes Clement of Rome (c. 95) and other Apostolic Fathers,<sup>373</sup> The Didache (120), Justin Martyr (c. 150–155), Marcion [Gnostic] (c. 140), the Muratorian fragment (c. 170), Theophilus of Antioch (181), Irenaeus (130–202), Clement of Alexandria (185–211), Tertullian (198–210), Origen (c. 185–254), the Old Latin, Old Syriac, Eusebius (325–340), etc.

The modern, critical denial of Pauline authorship began with Evanson (1792) and later, F. C. Baur and the Tübingen school of radical criticism, which denied either the authorship or the unity of the Epistle. Some modern, rationalistic biblical critics deny the unity of Romans, alleging that the final two chapters were by a different author.

### Provenance, Date and Purpose

Romans was written from Corinth c. 57 (Rom. 1:1; 16:21–23) during Paul's third missionary journey as he spent three months at the house of Gaius.<sup>374</sup> Paul dictated this letter through Tertius, his amanuensis (Rom. 16:22).

Note: what a day that must have been! We picture the aged Apostle pacing back and forth, deep in thought, under Divine inspiration; Gaius, Timothy, Luke and others seated about the room, listening to Paul as he unfolded the glorious truths to them and to his amanuensis, Tertius.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>373</sup> The Apostolic Fathers were the early Christian writers and writings whose lives overlapped those of the original Apostles, e.g., Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Polycarp (c. 110–150), etc.

<sup>374</sup> For the background, see pp. 171–174.

<sup>375</sup> C. G. Moule vividly portrays this scenario in his exposition of Romans in *The Expositor's Bible*, V, pp. 513–623.

Note: Paul's use of an *amenuensis* was customary due to his *ophthalmia* and gnarled hands, worn and stiffened from years of working the *cilicium*, deformed from his various sufferings and doubtless arthritic. He could barely scrawl his own signature (Gal. 6:11; 2 Thess. 3:17).<sup>376</sup>

The purpose is manifold: first, to introduce himself to and prepare the believers at Rome for his anticipated arrival (Acts 19:21; Rom. 1:9–13; 15:15–32).

Second, to establish the Roman believers in the faith, and impart to them a spiritual gift, as they had no apostolic founding (1:11–12).

Third, because of Judaistic error, opposition and possible martyrdom, and the need for a positive, didactic and definitive statement of truth, Paul sets forth the major truth of salvation in a comprehensive and systematic letter with the righteousness of God as the major theme.

Fourth, to counteract opposition to the gospel he preached. Rumors from Judaizers had been circulating concerning Paul's message which needed correction (1:1–5; 2:17–3:8; 6:1–8:17; 9:1–11:36).

Fifth, to deal with the practical issues of the gospel within the life of the church, including stronger and weaker brethren and doctrinal divisions (12:1–15:19; 16:17–18).

Sixth, to ask for their prayers for his anticipated trip to Jerusalem with the offering for the poor believers there and for his future ministry in Spain, as he expands his ministry into the western part of the empire (15:23–32).

Finally, Considering his age, health and doubtful circumstances, this was his opportunity to set forth his "Philosophy of the Christian Religion" in all its fullness and teaching, relating it to Doctrine (Chapters 1–8), Redemptive History (Chapters 9–11) and Practicality (Chapters 12–16).

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<sup>376</sup> Galatians and Thessalonians were written early in Paul's ministry, and even then his physical infirmities were a determining factor.

## The Recipients: the Church at Rome

The letter is addressed to those in Rome (1:7ff), thus it is classified as a Church Epistle. From all evidence and accounts, the church at Rome was predominantly a Gentile body with a Jewish minority. The origin of the church in Rome is shrouded in mystery. It was not established by an Apostle.

Note: The idea that Peter had been there for twenty-five years and established the church at Rome is largely based on the supposition that “Babylon” (1 Pet. 5:13; Rev. 17:5; 18:2, 10, 21) is the spiritual designation for Rome. It is best to take “Babylon” in Peter’s Epistle literally. This would change the western paradigm to an eastern one and point to the rise of Islam in the latter days rather than Rome and the West. Further, Paul does not mention Peter in Rom. 16 with the other greetings, which would be inexplicable had he been there and founded the church. Peter was later brought to Rome, according to early tradition, where both he and Paul suffered martyrdom.

The possibilities are several: first, it may have been formed by both Jews and proselytes who were converted at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Second, as the center of the Roman World and Empire, it was frequented by Christians from the very beginning, both Gentiles and Jews (Acts 18:1–2), as the controversy over “Chrestus” reveals in 49 AD under Claudius. Third, The Jewish community existed in Rome since Jewish slaves were sent to Rome by the General Pompey in 63 BC. Some of these may have been converted later. Thus, by 49 AD there was a substantial number of believers in Rome. When Paul finally traveled to Rome three years later he found many believers both in Rome and throughout the surrounding area (Acts 28:13–15).<sup>377</sup>

## Theme: the Righteousness of God

The theme of Romans is the righteousness of God. The word “righteousness” occurs thirty-five times, “righteous” four times, “justified” ten times, “justification” three times, “just” five times and “justify” once. The truth of justification by faith refers to an imputed, not an infused righteousness, which would confuse

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<sup>377</sup> For a description of the City of Rome, see pp. 200–202.

justification with sanctification. Note the development of this theme throughout the epistle:

|                                              |              |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------|
| Righteousness Revealed in The Gospel         | (1:16–17)    |
| Righteousness Required from Humanity         | (1:18–3:20)  |
| Righteousness Received by Faith Alone        | (3:21–5:21)  |
| Righteousness Realized in Sanctification     | (6:1–8:11)   |
| Righteousness Retained in Glorification      | (8:12–39)    |
| Righteousness Rejected by Non-Elect Israel   | (9:1–11:36)  |
| Righteousness Reproduced in A Converted Life | (12:1–16:27) |

This preeminent theme forms the “text” of this epistle (1:16–17). The gospel reveals the not only the power of God unto salvation [δύναμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν], but the very righteousness of God from start to finish [δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν].

### Characteristics

The distinct characteristics of this epistle are numerous: Romans is the most formal of Paul’s letters. It contains an unusual lengthy introduction and personal conclusion, and in its main body is more of a doctrinal treatise than letter. It is more irenic in spirit than other letters, e.g., Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Romans contains more references to the Old Testament than all of Paul’s other letters combined.<sup>378</sup> There are seventy-four references from fourteen different Old Testament books, notably Isaiah and the Psalms. Of the seventy-one times “It is written” [γέγραπται, perf. “It stands written”] occurs in the New Testament, seventeen occur in Romans. Paul establishes at almost every critical point that his gospel was that promised by the Old Testament prophets (e.g., 1:1–2, 17; 2:24; 3:4, 10; 4:17, etc.).

Both Galatians and Romans warn against both legalism and antinomianism. In Romans, Paul reveals that all men are by nature under condemnation (1:18–3:20), that both Jew and Gentile are equally condemned (1:18–3:18). He reveals that all men, Jew and Gentile alike, as the image-bearers of God, have

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<sup>378</sup> 1 Corinthians: 30 references; 2 Corinthians: 20; Galatians: 13. See W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, p. 173.



the work of the law indelibly inscribed upon their inner beings, making them morally responsible. This coincides with the Moral Law which reveals the moral character or righteousness of God. This Moral Law of God will be the Divine standard on the final Day of Judgment (3:19–20). He reveals that righteousness before God is not by the law but by faith (3:21–5:21), and that antinomianism is the wrong conclusion (6:1ff).

Chapters 9–11 deal with the enigma of Israel's unbelief and rejection. If salvation is by free and sovereign grace, and saving grace is invincible (3:21–8:39), how can the spiritual history of Israel be explained? The answer: Israel's rejection not final as to number or in time. The Jews will be converted and brought to faith in the sovereign purpose of God as Christians.

### Outline

Developed in a three-fold manner, each section is distinct—Doctrinal, Historical, Practical—and closes with a doxology. The following is a general outline of the epistle:

This Epistle is essentially three-fold in its development:

- I. Doctrinal (Chapters 1–8)
- II. Historical (Chapters 9–11)
- III. Practical (Chapters 12–16)

No short analysis does justice to its contents. The following outline seeks to fully analyze its contents:

- Introduction (v. 1–17)
- A. Salutation (v. 1–7)
  - 1. Personal Consecration (v. 1)
    - a. A marked servitude (v. 1a)
    - b. A missionary spirit (v. 1b)
    - c. A marvelous separation (v. 1c)
  - 2. Gospel Manifestation (v. 1–6)
    - a. Promised by the prophets in the OT (v. 2a)
    - b. Inscripturated by the Spirit (v. 2b)
    - c. Fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3–6)
  - 3. Proper Salutation (v. 7)
    - a. The readers (v. 7a)
    - b. The request (v. 7b)
- B. Introduction (v. 8–17)

- |                                       |                         |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Personal                           | (v. 8–15)               |
| a. Supplication                       | (v. 8–10)               |
| b. Anticipation                       | (v. 10–13)              |
| c. Evangelization                     | (v. 14–15)              |
| 2. Doctrinal                          | (v. 16–17)              |
| a. The Gospel considered Dynamically  | (v. 16a) <sup>379</sup> |
| b. The Gospel considered Historically | (v. 16b)                |
| c. The Gospel considered Morally      | (v. 17a) <sup>380</sup> |
| d. The Gospel considered Practically  | (v. 17b)                |

### Part I:

#### Doctrinal (1:18–3:20)

##### A. Condemnation (1:18–3:20)

Gospel righteousness is absolutely needed and unattainable by fallen, sinful man, despite religion. Every approach that man might attempt is utterly cut off, for it is “by faith from start to finish.”<sup>381</sup> Sinful humanity is found to be inclusively under Divine condemnation:

|                      |                |           |            |
|----------------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Every Human Being is | ETHICALLY      | Condemned | (1:18–20)  |
| Every Human Being is | HISTORICALLY   | Condemned | (1:21–22)  |
| Every Human Being is | INTELLECTUALLY | Condemned | (1:21–22)  |
| Every Human Being is | RELIGIOUSLY    | Condemned | (1:23–24)  |
| Every Human Being is | SCIENTIFICALLY | Condemned | (1:25)     |
| Every Human Being is | MORALLY        | Condemned | (1:26–28)  |
| Every Human Being is | SOCIALLY       | Condemned | (1:29–31)  |
| Every Human Being is | WILLFULLY      | Condemned | (1:32)     |
| Every Human Being is | RACIALLY       | Condemned | (2: 1–3:9) |
| Every Human Being is | UNIVERSALLY    | Condemned | (3:9–12)   |
| Every Human Being is | TOTALLY        | Condemned | (3:13–18)  |
| Every Human Being is | LEGALLY        | Condemned | (3:19–20)  |

The Analysis is Four-Fold:

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<sup>379</sup> δύνάμις γὰρ θεοῦ ἐστὶν εἰς σωτηρίαν, Anarth. The gospel derives its power directly from God.

<sup>380</sup> δικαιοσύνη γὰρ θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀποκαλύπτεται, Emph. pos. and anarth. The focal-point of the gospel is righteousness. This gospel righteousness answers to the Divine demand and standard.

<sup>381</sup> ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν... ἐκ (gen.) denotes the source, and εἰς (acc.) the extent of the action. In 1:18 to 3:20, the Apostle demonstrates that every possible approach to God, except by faith alone, is utterly condemned.

1. The Moral History of Human Depravity (1:18–32)
  - a) Man's Responsibility to God (1:18–20)
    - (1) Sin Is Deliberate (1:18)
    - (2) Sin Is Inexcusable (1:20)
  - b) Man's Rejection of God (1:21–23)
    - (1) Sin Is Theological (1:21–23)
    - (2) Sin Is Judgmental (1:21–23)
  - c) Man's Reprobation by God (1:24–32)
    - (1) Immorality and Idolatry (1: 24–25)
    - (2) Immorality—Homosexuality (1: 26–27)
    - (3) Immorality—Human Depravity (1: 28–32)
2. A Logical Essay on Human Depravity (2:1–3:9)
  - a) The Jew and Divine Judgment (2:1–16)
    - (1) The Judgment of God Is According to Truth (2:2)
    - (2) The Judgment of God Is Universal (2:3)
    - (3) The Judgment of God Is Righteous (2:5)
    - (4) The Judgment of God is according to Works (2:6)
    - (5) The Judgment of God is without Respect of Persons (2:11)
    - (6) The Judgment of God is According to the Gospel (2:16)
  - b) The Jew and a Definite Revelation (2:17–29)
 

This section in the form of an introverted outline:

    - a) Being a Jew—A Spiritual Pride (2:17)
    - b) Jewish Claims to Privilege (2:17–18)
      - c) Jewish Claims to Superiority (2:19–20)
      - c) Jewish Claims to Superiority Refuted (2:21–22)
    - b) Jewish Claims to Privilege Refuted (2:23–24)
    - a) Being a Jew—A Spiritual Principle (2:25–29)<sup>382</sup>
  - c) The Jew and a Distinct Advantage (3:1–8)
    - (1) The First Objection and Answer (3:1–2)
    - (2) The Second Objection and Answer (3:3–4)
    - (3) The Third Objection and Answer (3:5–8)
  - d) The Jew and Divine Judgment (3: 9)

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<sup>382</sup> The covenant—sign of circumcision under the Old Covenant has been replaced by spiritual circumcision, or regeneration under the New or Gospel Covenant. Everyone in the New Covenant is regenerated (Cf. Rom. 4:9–11; Col. 2:11–12). Believer's baptism by immersion is symbolic of the believer's union with Christ (Rom. 6:3–6).

- 3. A Pictorial Anatomy of Human Depravity (3:9–18)
  - a) Human Depravity is Universal (3:9–12)
  - b) Human Depravity is Total (3:13–18)
- 4. The Legal Futility of Human Depravity (3:19–20)<sup>383</sup>
  - a) The Authority of the Law (3:19)
  - b) The Jurisdiction of the Law (3:19)
  - c) The Condemnation of the Law (3:20)
  - d) The Purpose of the Law (3:20)
- B. Justification (3:21–5:21)
  - 1. The ANALYSIS of Justification by Faith (3:21–31)
    - a. The Revelation of the Divine Method of Justifying the Sinner (3:21–26)
      - (1) The Great Transition (3:21–23)
        - (a) The Revelation of a Gospel–righteousness (3:21)
        - (b) The Attestation of a Gospel–righteousness (3:21)
        - (c) The Operation of a Gospel–righteousness (3:22)
        - (d) The Inclusion of a Gospel–righteousness (3:22b–23)
      - (2) The Great Exposition (3:24–26)
        - (a) Justification—A *Revelation* of its principle and means (3:24)
        - (b) Justification—An *Explanation* of its propitiatory method (3:25)
        - (c) Justification—A *Declaration* of its purpose and meaning (3:25–26)
    - b. The Results of the Divine Method of Justifying the Sinner (3:27–31)
      - (1) All boasting Excluded (3:27–28)
      - (2) All distinctions Abolished (3:29–30)
      - (3) The Law Established (3:31)
  - 2. The APOLOGY for Justification by Faith (4:1–25)
    - a) Justification *is* by Faith (4:1–3)
    - b) Justification is *not* by Works (4:4–8)
    - c) Justification is *not* by Circumcision (4:9–12)
    - b) Justification is *not* by Law (4:13–17)
    - a) Justification *is* by Faith (4:18–25)

To fill in the outline, the format is re–arranged:

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<sup>383</sup> The Moral Law is presented by the Apostle as an ever–present reality, and the entire world as existing “under the law” [ἐν τῷ νόμῳ], i.e., in the sphere of the Law’s authority and jurisdiction, and facing judgment by this Divine standard.

- a. Justification is by Faith (4:13)
- b. Justification is Not by Works (4:4–8)
  - 1. Abraham—A Positive Illustration (4:1–5)
  - 2. David—A Negative Illustration (4:6–8)
- c. Justification is Not by Circumcision (4:9–12)
  - The Question—Is Justification an exclusive Jewish Privilege? (4:9)
  - The Answer—Abraham was Justified by Faith as an Uncircumcised Gentile (4:10)
  - 3. The Implications—Devastating to Jewish Religious Pride and Security (4:11–12)
- d. Justification is Not by Law (4:13–17)
  - 1. Negative: The Promise and the Principle of Law—Works (4:13–15)
  - 2. Positive: The Promise and Faith—the Principle of Grace (4:16–17)
- e. Justification is by Faith (4:17–25)
  - 1. The Argument—The Faith of Abraham Described (4:17–22)
  - 2. The Application—The Faith of Abraham Applied (4:23–25)
- 3. The ASSURANCE of Justification by Faith (5:1–21)
  - a. Assurance: Logical and Experiential (5:1–11)
    - 1. The Scope of Justification by Faith (5:1–2)
      - (a) A Past Fact (5:1a)
      - (b) A Present Reality (5:1b)
      - (c) A Present Privilege (5:1c–2a)
      - (d) A Future Hope (5:2b)
    - 2. The Strength of Justification by Faith (5:3–5)
      - (a) Perception, or the Development of Perseverance (5:3)
      - (b) Maturation, or the Development of Character (5:4a)
      - (c) Anticipation, or the Strengthening of Hope (5:4b)
      - (d) Confirmation, or the Assurance of Divine Love (5:5)
  - 3. The Sphere of Justification by Faith (5:5–11)
    - (a) Divine Love—Proof for the Present (5:5–8)
      - (1) The Copiousness of this Divine Love (5:5)
      - (2) The Character of this Divine Love (5:6–8a)
      - (3) The Constancy of this Divine Love (5:8a)
    - (b) Divine Love—Assurance for the Future (5:9–11)

|                                                               |                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| (1) The Completeness of this Divine Love                      | (5:9)                     |
| (2) The Confidence of this Divine Love                        | (5:10–11)                 |
| b. Assurance: Logical and Positional                          | (5:12–21)                 |
| 1. The Condemnation in Adam                                   | (5:12–14)                 |
| (a) The Proposition                                           | (5:12)                    |
| (b) The Proof                                                 | (5:13–14)                 |
| 2. The Contrast Between Adam and Christ                       | (5:15–17)                 |
| (a) A Contrast of Nature                                      | (5:15)                    |
| (b) A Contrast of Result                                      | (5:16)                    |
| (c) A Contrast of Quality                                     | (5:17)                    |
| 3. The Comparison Between Adam and Christ                     | (5:18–19)                 |
| 4. The Consideration of the Law                               | (5:20)                    |
| 5. The Conclusion or Reign of Grace                           | (5:20–21)                 |
| (a) An Explanation of this Glorious Grace                     | (5:20)                    |
| (b) An Exposition of this Glorious Grace                      | (5:21)                    |
| C. Sanctification                                             | (6:1–8:16) <sup>384</sup> |
| Considered under the general heading of holiness of life:     |                           |
| 1. The Principle of Holiness                                  | (6:1–11)                  |
| 2. The Practice of Holiness                                   | (6:12–7:6)                |
| 3. The Preventive of Holiness                                 | (7:7–8:4)                 |
| 4. The Power of Holiness                                      | (8:1–16)                  |
| Or, considered as to the various warnings<br>in this section: |                           |
| 1. A Warning against Antinomianism                            | (6:1–23)                  |
| a. The Question concerning <i>living in sin</i> answered      | (6:1–14)                  |
| 1. The Question                                               | (6:1)                     |
| 2. The Declaration                                            | (6:2)                     |
| 3. The Explanation                                            | (6:3–10)                  |
| 4. The Application                                            | (6:11)                    |
| 5. The Exhortation                                            | (6:12–13)                 |
| 6. The Conclusion                                             | (6:14)                    |
| b. The Question concerning <i>committing acts</i>             |                           |

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<sup>384</sup> The subject of sanctification actually begins at 5:12–21, where it is found or grounded in the believer's union with Christ. As he was once in Adam, so now he is in Christ. The results of this union are found in chapter six: union in our Lord's death, the breaking of the reigning power of sin; union in his resurrection–life, the same power which raised our Lord from the dead, the dynamic of the Holy Spirit empowers believers. To begin sanctification only at 6:1 would rob the truth of its objective character and thus its utter necessity.

|                                                                                            |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| <i>of sin</i> answered                                                                     | (6:15–23)  |
| 1. The Question                                                                            | (6:15)     |
| 2. The Generalization                                                                      | (6:16)     |
| 3. The Application                                                                         | (6:17–18)  |
| 4. The Exhortation                                                                         | (6:19)     |
| 5. The Explanation                                                                         | (6:20–23)  |
| 2. A Warning against Legalism                                                              | (7:1–8:4)  |
| a. Our relation to the Law                                                                 | (7:1–6)    |
| 1. The Generalization                                                                      | (7:1)      |
| 2. The Illustration                                                                        | (7:2–3)    |
| 3. The Application                                                                         | (7:7–13)   |
| a. Sin is not Identical with the Law                                                       | (7:7)      |
| b. Sin and the Nature of the Law                                                           | (7:8)      |
| c. Sin and the Penalty of the Law                                                          | (7:9–11)   |
| d. Sin is Revealed by the Law                                                              | (7:12–13)  |
| c. Sanctification and the Law                                                              | (7:14–8:4) |
| 1. The Inward Struggle: A Portrait of Conflict                                             | (7:14–20)  |
| 2. The Inward Struggle: Its Principles of Contradiction                                    | (7:21–25)  |
| 3. The Inward Struggle: The Power of Consistency                                           | (8:1–4)    |
| 3. A Warning against Presumption                                                           | (8:5–11)   |
| a. A contrast of States: Spiritual or Carnal                                               | (8:5–7)    |
| b. A contrast of Spheres: Life or Death                                                    | (8:8–11)   |
| Or, to further outline the transition from present sanctification to future glorification: |            |
| a. The Present Deliverance from the Penalty of Sin                                         | (8:1–2)    |
| b. The Positive Deliverance from the Power of Sin                                          | (8:3–9)    |
| c. The Projected Deliverance from the Presence of Sin                                      | (8:10–11)  |
| d. The Powerful Determination to Mortify Sin                                               | (8:12–16)  |
| D. Glorification                                                                           | (8:12–39)  |
| 1. The Believer's Awareness of Coming Glory                                                | (8:12–17)  |
| a. The Consecration of Spiritual Sonship                                                   | (8:12–13)  |
| b. The Characteristic of Spiritual Sonship                                                 | (8:14)     |
| c. The Confidence of Spiritual Sonship                                                     | (8:15)     |
| d. The Confirmation of Spiritual Sonship                                                   | (8:16–17)  |
| 2. The Believer's Anticipation of Coming Glory                                             | (8:18–27)  |
| a. The Present Affliction of the Believer                                                  | (8:17–18)  |
| b. The Promised Emancipation of the Believer                                               | (8:19–25)  |
| c. The Present Intercession for the Believer                                               | (8:26–27)  |

- 3. The Believer's Assurance of Coming Glory (8:28–30)
  - a. The Proposition, or Unshakable Conviction (8:28)
  - b. The Proof, or Undeniable Affirmation (8:29–30)
- E. The First Doxology (8:31–39)<sup>385</sup>
  - 1. The Immutability of Divine Love (8:28–30)
  - 2. The Inexhaustibility of Divine Love (8:31–32)
  - 3. The Indivisibility of Divine Love (8:33–34)
  - 4. The Invincibility of Divine Love (8:35–39)

## Part Two: Historical (9:1–11:36)

This section answers the impending objection: If saving grace is free and sovereign, and the redemptive purpose of God is immutable and invincible, how can the unbelief of Israel be explained?

- A. Personal Sincerity (9:1–5)
  - 1. The Sincerity of Paul (9:1–2)
  - 2. The Extremity of Paul (9:2–3)
  - 3. The Rationality of Paul (9:4–5)
- B. Divine Sovereignty (9:6–29)
  - a) The Promise of God: Immutable (9:6–9)
    - b) The Principle of Election: Unconditional (9:10–13)
    - b) The Prerogative of Election: Unquestionable (9:14–23)
  - a) The People of God: Spiritual (9:24–29)

To fill in the outline, the format is re-arranged:

- 1. The Promise of God–Immutable (9:6–9)
  - a. The Objection Anticipated (9:6)
  - b. The Objection Answered (9:6–9)
- 2. The Principle of Election–Unconditional (9:10–13)
  - a. Election is Not Based on Foreseen Merit (9:10–12)
  - b. Election is Personal, not merely National (9:13)
- 3. The Prerogative of Election–Unquestionable (9:14–23)
  - a. God Is Unrighteous (9:14–18)
  - b. God Is Unkind (9:19–21)
- 4. The People of God–Spiritual (9:24–29)
  - a. The Doctrinal Proposition (9:22–24)
  - b. The Scriptural Principle (9:25–29)
- C. Human Responsibility (9:30–10:21)
  - 1. The Failure of Israel: Disobedience and Ignorance (9:30–10:4)

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<sup>385</sup> There are three doxologies in this Epistle to the Romans: 8:28–39; 11:33–36 and 16:25. Each concludes the preceding section.



- a. The Reason for Israel's Failure (9:30–33)
- b. The Results of Israel's Failure (10:1–3)
- c. The Reality of Israel's Failure (10:4)
- 2. The Failure of Israel: Obedience of Faith (10:5–15)
  - a. Righteousness by Faith: Its Necessity (10:5)
  - b. Righteousness by Faith: Its Proximity (10:6–10)
    - (1) Faith–Righteousness Personified (v. 6–8)
    - (2) Faith–Righteousness Exemplified (v. 9–10)
  - c. Righteousness by Faith: Its Security (10:11)
  - d. Righteousness by Faith: Its Universality (10:11–13)
  - e. Righteousness by Faith: Its Publicity (10:14–15)
- 3. The Failure of Israel: Unbelief and Disobedience (10:16–21)
  - a. The Universality of the Gospel (10:16–18)
  - b. The Culpability of Unbelief (10:19–21)
- D. Israel's Destiny (11:1–32)<sup>386</sup>
  - 1. Israel's Rejection not Total as to Number (11:1–10)
    - a. The Question Asked (11:1)
    - b. The Question Answered (11:1–10)
  - 2. Israel's Rejection not Final as to Time (11:11–32)
    - a. The Question Asked (11:11)
    - b. The Question Answered (11:11–32)
- E. Second Doxology (11:33–36)
  - 1. The Inscrutability of the Divine Counsel (11:33–35)
  - 2. The Infinity of the Divine Character (11:36)

### Part Three: Practical (12:1–16:20)

In an ever–expanding progression, the believer's life, reflecting the foregoing truth, is considered in its varied aspects.

- A. The Believer's Spiritual Obligation–Consecration (12:1–2)
  - 1. Consecration or Holiness in Principle (12:1)
  - 2. Transformation or Holiness in Practice (12:2)
- B. The Believer's Congregational Obligation–Church (12:3–13)
  - 1. The Virtues and Graces of our Labor (12:3–8)
    - a. Humility (12:3–5)
    - b. Fidelity (12:6–8a)
  - 2. The Virtues and Graces of our Love (12:9–13)
    - a. Sincerity (12:8b–9a)
    - b. Purity (12:9b)

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<sup>386</sup> As Israel and the Gentiles are contrasted in this chapter, it is inconsistent to always identify Israel with the church.

|                                                  |              |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| c. Impartiality                                  | (12:10)      |
| d. Spirituality                                  | (12:11–12)   |
| e. Generosity                                    | (12:13a)     |
| f. Hospitality                                   | (12:13b)     |
| C. The Believer's Social Obligation–Community    | (12:14–21)   |
| 1. Attitude toward the community                 | (12:14–15)   |
| 2. Associations with the community               | (12:16–18)   |
| 3. Actions toward the community                  | (12:19–21)   |
| D. The Believer's Civil Obligation–Citizenship   | (13:1–14)    |
| a) Our Attitude as Christians                    | (13:1–5)     |
| b) Our Allegiance as Christians                  | (13:6–7)     |
| b) Our Associations as Christians                | (13:8–10)    |
| a) Our Actions as Christians                     | (13:11–14)   |
| E. The Believer's Ethical Obligation–Conscience  | (14:1–15:13) |
| 1. Our Convictions: Christ is our Judge          | (14:1–12)    |
| 2. Our Conscience: Faith is our Principle        | (14:13–23)   |
| 3. Our Consideration: Christ is our Example      | (15:1–13)    |
| F. The Believer's Evangelical Obligation–Calling | (15:14–33)   |
| 1. The Confidence of Paul                        | (15:14)      |
| 2. The Calling of Paul                           | (15:15–17)   |
| 3. The Claim of Paul                             | (15:18–23)   |
| 4. The Contemplation of Paul                     | (15:24)      |
| 5. The Concern of Paul                           | (15:25–33)   |
| G. The Believer's Mutual Obligation–Charity      | (16:16)      |
| a) Love in Association                           | (16:1)       |
| b) Love in Action                                | (16:2)       |
| b) Love in Appreciation                          | (16:2)       |
| a) Love in Association                           | (16:3–16)    |
| H. The Believer's Doctrinal Obligation–Caution   | (16:17–19)   |
| 1. The Duty in Doctrinal Danger                  | (16:17)      |
| 2. The Danger of Doctrinal Deception             | (16:18)      |
| 3. The Duty of Doctrinal Discernment             | (16:19)      |
| I. Conclusion                                    | (16:20–24)   |
| The Closing Doxology                             | (16:25–27)   |

### Structure and Survey

The Epistle moves from the doctrinal—condemnation, justification, sanctification and glorification (Chapters 1–8) to the Historical—if salvation is by grace and infallible, how can the

unbelief and rejection of Israel be explained? Paul reveals that this unbelief and rejection is not total as to number or permanent as to time (Chapters 9–11), to the Practical—how righteousness is expressed in the various spheres or aspects of the life (Chapters 12–16).

### Introduction (1:1–17)

The Gospel, promised in the Scriptures and by the prophets, centers on the righteousness of God. Righteousness is by faith from start to finish (1:16–17).<sup>387</sup> This short section forms the “text” of the entire epistle.

### Part I: Doctrinal (1:18–8:39)

This first section, Romans chapters 1–8, lays the doctrinal foundation of the entire epistle. There is one inclusive argument: after revealing the utter condemnation of fallen, sinful mankind, both Jew and Gentile (1:18–3:20), the Apostle Paul reveals that justification is by faith (3:21–5:21), then, that everyone so justified must necessarily be sanctified (5:12–8:16), and finally, everyone so justified and sanctified must inevitably be glorified (8:17–39).

### Universal Condemnation (1:18–3:20)

The theme of righteousness [justification] by faith is the overall argument throughout and the basis for that which follows—sanctification and glorification. All men, Jews with their ritualistic religion and Gentiles with their wicked and immoral paganism are both equally condemned (1:18–3:20).

### Justification by Faith (3:21–5:21)

The justification of sinners through the blood of the cross is revealed to be a truth revealed in the Old Testament. Abraham and David are singled out as positive and negative examples.

God justifies the sinner through faith in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is vital to understand that the ground or foundation for sanctification is the believer’s union with Christ

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<sup>387</sup>Note v. 17, ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν, lit: “from start to finish” or “from beginning to end.”

as reflecting his past union with Adam, i.e., sanctification possesses an objective basis (5:12–21).

#### Sanctification (6:1–8:17)

This section is three-fold: a warning against antinomianism (6:1–24), a warning against legalism (7:1–4) and a warning against presumption (8:5–17). Those whom God justifies He also sanctifies. The emphasis in chapter 6 is upon definitive sanctification.

Note: Sanctification has three aspects: positional, definitive and practical and progressive. Positional sanctification refers to the spiritual position or status which results from the believer's union with Christ. This union is an indissoluble and unalterable union which raises the believer to the greatest possible identification and the highest possible position "in Christ" (Eph. 2:4–7). Every spiritual blessing and privilege which is "in Christ" thus accrue to the believer, who is "sanctified in Christ Jesus."

Definitive sanctification is that aspect of the redemptive purpose and process, wherein a definitive breach or radical cleavage is made with the reigning power of sin in the life beginning at regeneration. It is union in both Christ's death and resurrection-life. This aspect of sanctification necessarily derives from one's position "in Christ" [positional sanctification] and is itself necessarily evidenced in a converted life [progressive sanctification]. Definitive sanctification is therefore distinct but inseparable from the believer's union with Christ and the grace of God in regeneration.

Progressive or practical sanctification is the manifestation of both positional and definitive sanctification in the life, experience and spiritual pilgrimage of the believer. In other words, practical or progressive sanctification is coextensive with Christian experience. This process is to be viewed in the context of the reality of conversion and in both the continuation and progress of grace in the life.

6:15 to 8:4 deal with the believer's relation to the law. We died to the law as to its penalty by virtue of our union with Christ. The law has its proper place in saving conviction of sin. In 7:13–7:25, Paul takes up the sad reality of indwelling sin and remaining corruption. Sin is not charged to the "old man" or "nature," but to a principle of indwelling sin and remaining corruption. We died to the law; the law did not die. The Christian experience to be lived in the power of the Spirit and thus in

conformity to God's law. Paul never taught antinomianism (8:1–4).

#### Glorification (8:18–8:30)

Those whom God justifies and sanctifies He will infallibly glorify (8:18–39). The soul is redeemed and purified in present sanctification. The body will be fully and finally redeemed in our glorification. Thus, our present experience is both fulfilling and also expectant.

#### Doxology (8:31–39)

Paul moves immediately into the great and glorious doxology which is the high-point of this Epistle, if not of all Scripture as he contemplates the infallibility of the redemptive purpose, the very worst that man can do in this life and the glory of the believer's position in Christ. Our ultimate victory is assured in the love of God in Christ Jesus. The eternal outweighs the temporal; the Divine purpose outweighs all suffering and trial.

#### Part II: Historical (9:1–11:36)

Chapters 9–11 are historical. Paul deals with the unbelief and rejection of Israel in the context of Divine predestination and the eternal redemptive purpose. Christ was to be the fulfillment of all their hope and promises; they failed through their unbelief, self-righteousness and works-mentality. Their spiritual advantages availed them nothing. Such is the blindness of a works mentality. Yet there exists a spiritual remnant. He closes with a prophecy of the future restoration and conversion of national Israel as believers.

#### Part III: Practical (12:1–16:27)

In Chapters 12–16, Paul works out the necessary consequences of righteousness by faith practically in the life of the individual and church. The areas and aspects included are: the believer's spiritual obligation—his personal consecration (12:1–2), the believer's congregational obligation—to his church (12:3–13), the believer's social obligation—to the community (12:14–21), the believer's civil obligation—concerning his citizenship (13:1–14), the believer's ethical obligation—matters of conscience

(14:1–15:13), the believer’s evangelical obligation—one’s calling (15:14–33), the believer’s mutual obligation—charity (16:16) and finally, the believer’s doctrinal obligation—caution concerning those who would cause divisions (16:17–19). Every aspect of the Christian life and experience demands a consecrated approach, a loving attitude and faithfulness to God.

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:1). Paul’s self-portrait. He was a bondsman of Jesus Christ, a called Apostle [κλητὸς ἀπόστολος], and his life was off-horizoned<sup>388</sup> unto the gospel, i.e., the gospel dominated his life from every perspective.
2. (1:16–17). The text and theme of Romans. The gospel was been called the “dynamite” [δύναμις] of God.<sup>389</sup> The gospel reveals not only the love of God, but preeminently the righteousness of God. This revelation is apprehended by faith alone, i.e., [ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν] by faith from start to finish.
3. (1:18–32). The utter condemnation of the benighted Gentiles. Mark v. 18, habitually suppressing the truth [κατεχόντων]. v. 20, “inexcusable,” lit: without a defense or apologetic [ἀναπολογήτους]. v. 21. The noetic effects of sin revealed in the futility of unregenerate reasoning [ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν] and the incapacitated mind-set [ἐσκοτίσθη ἡ ἀσύνετος αὐτῶν καρδιά].

Fallen, sinful mankind distorts the reality of God through idolatry and received the moral judgment of God in moral perversion. v. 25 is summary: They are such that they exchanged the truth of God for “the lie” [τῷ ψεύδει], i.e., the universal principle of falsehood which characterizes sinful humanity. They side-stepped the Creator to worship creation

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<sup>388</sup> ἀφωρισμένος, lit: “off-horizoned,” marked out.

<sup>389</sup> Of the several terms for power, δύναμις emph. the source of power. J. Frank Norris, a prominent Baptist preacher (1877–1952) once declared, “The Gospel is the ‘dynamite of God’! It blows the gates of hell off their hinges!”

[καὶ ἐλάτρευσαν τῇ κτίσει παρὰ τὸν κτίσαντα]. The sinful, dreadful list of human depravity is detailed in v. 26–32—and sinful mankind is fully responsible for its sinful condition!

4. (2:1ff). The Jew, at first unnamed, is as guilty as the benighted Gentile. The truth of God, once distorted, loses its saving efficacy.
5. (2:12–16). All men, as the image-bearers of God, have the law indelibly inscribed upon their inner being, giving them an instinctive knowledge of right and wrong and rendering them intelligent, morally-responsible beings.
6. (2:28–29). The true “Jew” is not one circumcised in the flesh, but in the heart. “Heart-circumcision” is regeneration, the sign of the New or Gospel Covenant (Col. 2:11f).
7. (3:9–18). The utter condemnation of all men, both the Jew and the benighted Gentile: The Gentile in his pagan idolatry and immorality and the Jew in his self-righteous works-mentality. A collage of scriptural references bear this out.
8. (3:19–20). The Moral Law of God holds universal sway over fallen, sinful mankind. It will be the holy, perfect standard of judgment on the final day. Its function is to reveal sin for what it is before God (Rom. 5:19; 7:7ff).
9. (3:21–31). The very heart of the gospel—the imputation of the righteousness of the Jesus Christ by faith. The gospel does not abrogate God’s law, but rather establishes it. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ answers to the claims of Divine law.
10. (4:1–7). Abraham is the great positive example of justification by faith in the Old Testament, and David is the great negative example.
11. (4:9–11). Paul notes that Abraham was circumcised as a believer, and to him alone as such, circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of his faith. By implication and application, this passage cannot be used as an argument for infant sprinkling. Every blessing came to Abraham by faith.
12. (5:1–2). The blessed aspects of justification by faith are enumerated here: past, “having been justified by faith” [Δικαιωθέντες, aor. ptc.]; present, “we have [ἔχομεν] peace with God.” We also have continual and unhindered access to

Him [τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἐσχήκαμεν, perf.]. Every hindrance has been removed. And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God, emphasizing the future certainty of justification. Note carefully that Paul argues from justification to glorification.

13. (5:3ff). Paul deals with the adversities of our present Christian experience and the joy which comes through the enabling grace of the Holy Spirit through whom the love of God which has been poured out constantly and without reserve.<sup>390</sup> Paul reasons from the lesser to the greater concerning our salvation.<sup>391</sup> God will infallibly finish what He has begun.
14. (5:12–18). The parallel is drawn between Adam, our first federal head and the Lord Jesus Christ. Through Adam sin was imputed to us; through Christ righteousness has been imputed to us. The contrast is between the “all” in Adam and the “all” in Christ.
15. (5:19–21). The law entered in alongside as the Divine straightedge to reveal the reality of sin, but where sin abounded, grace flooded and overflowed!<sup>392</sup> The reign of grace is not arbitrary, but reigns through righteousness unto eternal life.
16. (6:1, 15). 6:1 is framed in the pres.; 6:15 in the aor. The first refers to *living* in sin; the second to lightly committing *acts* of sin. Both are necessarily condemned.
17. (6:6). The “crucifixion of the old man” is not an experience to be sought, i.e., sanctification is not merely subjective. The “old man” was the old, unregenerate self, which “was crucified” with Christ.<sup>393</sup> Believers are the “new man” in

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<sup>390</sup> 5:5, ἐκκέχυται, to pour out without reserve, perf.

<sup>391</sup> Note v. 10, “in His life” [ἐν τῇ ζωῇ αὐτοῦ], anticipating the believer’s union with Christ in the next section.

<sup>392</sup> 5:20, παρεισθῆλθεν, came in alongside. πλεονάσῃ, abound. ὑπερεπερίσσευσεν, to abound beyond measure.

<sup>393</sup> 6:6, συνεσταυρώθη, aor., not pres. It must also be carefully noted that in v. 1–10, the aor. is used of “dead,” signifying “died,” an event, not “dead,” a state. Believers died to the reigning power of sin, but they are not “dead” to sin—the reality of definitive sanctification.



Christ (Eph. 4:22–24<sup>394</sup>; Col. 3:9–10).

Note: Sanctification, as revealed in Scripture, is three-fold: positional [union with Christ], definitive [a radical breach with sin's reigning power at regeneration] and practical and progressive [believers are destined to be conformed to the image of God's Son]. According to Romans chapter 6, the believer's union with Christ is a union in both his death and resurrection–life. Union in his death necessarily means that the reigning power of sin is broken [definitive sanctification, a radical cleavage made with the reigning power of sin]. Union in his resurrection–life necessarily means the entrance of the dynamic of Divine grace by the work of the Holy Spirit.

18. (7:7–25). The purpose of the law, as throughout this Epistle, is to face us with the reality of sin. This section is autobiographical of Paul's own conviction of sin before his conversion: "It is hard for you against the goads to kick" (Acts 9:5). When He uses the term "carnal" in v. 14, it means "made of flesh," and does not have the connotation bearing the characteristics of the flesh.

Note: 7:14, ἐγὼ δὲ σάρκινός εἰμι. "carnal" [σάρκινός] signifies "made of flesh." The other terms, σαρκικός or "carnal mind" [φρόνημα τῆς σαρκός] signify to have the mind-set and bear the marks or characteristics of the flesh, i.e., of being unregenerate (6:25–8:4). The subject of the believer's relation to the Law extends from 6:15 to 8:4. The chapter division at 8:1 is to be omitted. It is not until chapter 8 that the empowering work of the Holy Spirit is considered. Thus, there is no "getting out of Romans Chapter Seven into Romans Chapter 8."

19. (8:6ff). True believers possess the mind of the Spirit.
20. (8:4–14). The contrast is not between the so-called "carnal Christian" and the spiritual Christian, but between the unregenerate and regenerate. See previous comments.
21. (Chapter 8). This glorious chapter is one of the high points of Scripture. It culminates in the anticipation and expectation—the believer's certainty of final salvation—but what has God

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<sup>394</sup> The Eng. of Eph. 4:22–24 obscures the aor. inf. of result. The verbs are *not* commands. The grammar and translation of Col. 3:9–10 help clarify the matter.

given to sustain us in our present experience, with its trials and adversities? Mark these eighteen realities:

- (8:1–11). The presence and power of the Holy Spirit as the dynamic of our lives. Paul has reserved the reality of the work of the Holy Spirit until this section. (v. 1). We are wholly without condemnation by virtue of our union with Christ.
  - (8:1–4). The reigning power and principle of sin has been broken in our lives through the presence, power and grace of the Holy Spirit.
  - (8:1–4). The presence and power of the Holy Spirit brings us into conformity to the Moral Law of God in principle. There is no antinomian grace.
  - (8:5–8). The believer's life is now lived under the controlling influence of the Spirit [κατὰ πνεῦμα], no longer under the controlling influence of the flesh [κατὰ σάρκα].
  - (8:9–11). By the grace of the Holy Spirit, we no longer live in the sphere of the flesh, but in the sphere of the Spirit's presence and power [οὐκ ἐστὲ ἐν σαρκὶ ἀλλὰ ἐν πνεύματι].
  - (v. 11). Our resurrection unto glory is a certainty.
  - (v. 12–13). The power and witness of the Holy Spirit enables us to mortify sin.
  - (v. 14). The Holy Spirit gives us a true knowledge of our spiritual identity.
  - (v. 15–). The Holy Spirit gives us an intimate access to the Father.
  - (v. 16). We possess the deepest and most profound witness to our spiritual identity.
  - (v. 17–23). The truth that our future glory will be disproportionate to our present afflictions.
  - (v. 24–25). Our hope is grounded in both a certainty and an expectation of future glory.
  - (v. 26–27). The reality of the Holy Spirit's help in prayer to overcome our ignorance of our present circumstances.
  - (v. 28–30). The confidence that God is working all things together for our good, because the eternal redemptive purpose of God is immutable and infallible.
  - (v. 31–34). The triune God changes not in His covenant love and work.
  - (v. 35–37). The very worst that can happen to us in this life, even at the hands of men, cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.
  - (v. 38–39). Nothing in time or eternity, nothing celestial or infernal can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
22. (9:6). The *minutiae* of the Divine purpose. Some would argue that the nations of Israel and Edom are referred to (Mal. 1:2–3), and thus election is merely national. The Apostle traces this principle of sovereign grace back beyond

the prenatal state of Jacob and Esau (v.10, 'Πεβέκκα ἔξ ἐνὸς κοίτην ἔχουσα). The term *coitus* was left untranslated and euphemized by the italicized word *even*, referring to Isaac. The statement refers to one sexual act. Election and predestination are intensely and necessarily personal.

23. (9:11–24). Salvation rests with the sovereign prerogative of God according to His eternal, infallible purpose. But when God manifests his saving truth to sinners, He does so in terms of love. If men willingly spurn the gospel, can they have any ground of complaint? The very next chapter [10] reveals the sincere offer of salvation to sinful men.
24. (10:3). Christ is “the end of the Law”<sup>395</sup> only for righteousness, and only for those who believe. All others are under its wrath and condemnation.
25. (10:14–15). Lit “...whom they have not heard?” [οὐ οὐκ ἤκουσαν;]. The Lord himself speaks through preaching!
26. (11:1ff). The unbelief and rejection of Israel is not complete as to number or final as to time. The free and sovereign grace of God will infallibly draw and save His own from both the Jews and the Gentiles.
27. (11:33–36). The second doxology of this epistle, concluding the section on history. Paul glories in the eternal, infallible redemptive purpose of God. Is this not a call for us to do the same?
28. (12:1–2). Personal, holy, godly, intelligent consecration of God is the primary imperative for every believer. Godly, intelligent separation from the world is a necessity.<sup>396</sup>
29. (12:3, 6). The theological term “Analogy of Faith” is taken from v. 6 [τὴν ἀναλογίαν τῆς πίστεως], which speaks of personal faith. The Church Fathers took this objectively as referring to the Scriptures and so the terminology “the Analogy of Faith” entered theological language to describe

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<sup>395</sup> τέλος, end, termination, completion. The perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus has been imputed to the believer.

<sup>396</sup> 12:2, συσχηματίζω, “to assume an outward appearance.” “be not conformed to this world” [μὴ συσχηματίζεσθε τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ], “Do not masquerade in the garments of this age!”

the unity and non-contradictory nature of God's Word as it bears on any one given passage.

30. (12:8ff). 12:3–21 deal with the believer in the context of the local, gathered assembly of saints. In our giving to the Lord's work, we are to do so with "simplicity," i.e., without second thoughts [ὁ μεταδιδούς ἐν ἀπλότητι]. Love is to be without hypocrisy. True, brotherly love should exist between and among brothers and sisters in Christ.<sup>397</sup> The remainder of this section deserves a close study, as it portrays what a local, gathered church should be. Such church life is just as important as sound theology! The doctrinal and ethical are to meet in the fellowship of the saints.
31. (13:1–7). The Christian's relation to the state [government]. Two considerations: first, the civil magistrate is God's "deacon" [διάκονός] in civil affairs. Second, there may be a time when the believer must obey God rather than man (Acts 4:19; 5:29).
32. (13:8–10). Two truths: love is the fulfilling of the law; the law summarizes and expresses the reality of love. Love never sets aside law. When one loves his neighbor in the context of law, i.e., not slandering or endangering him, or lying about him or coveting what he has, he has loved his neighbor as himself. This is a scriptural love which possesses a distinct objective character.
33. (14:1–23). Christian liberty pertains to matters of diet, drink, dress and demeanor. There are four governing principles: first, the Scriptures are the one and only standard of conduct. Second, God as revealed in Scripture is the only Lord of the conscience. Third, the supreme motive for all things is the glory of God. Fourth, the conscience of the weaker brother must always be considered and not violated. His weaker conscience is to guide and govern the actions of the stronger brother (Rom. 14:1–23; 1 Cor. 10:14–33). A true, consistent and scriptural faith should characterize the Christian.

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<sup>397</sup> τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ εἰς ἀλλήλους φιλόστοργοι, the final term signifies the affectionate love which is to exist among siblings of the same family.

34. (15:1–17). Consistent conduct within the Christian assembly. In this section, chapters 14 and 15, one must remember that there were both Jewish and Gentile Christians. This meant racial, cultural dietary and social differences which must be understood and accounted for without seeking or causing offence.
35. (15:19–32). Paul's plans for future evangelization were subject to the providence of God. Whether he fulfilled his desire to preach the gospel in Spain, the Scriptures do not reveal, but we know of his trip to Jerusalem with the gift from the Gentile brethren, his arrest and subsequent imprisonment in both Judea and Rome. Our lives are subject to the leading of Divine providence and the will of God.
36. (16:1–20). The closing greetings of this epistle. These reveal that he had converted relatives and family members, some of whom may have been converted previous to his own conversion.<sup>398</sup> He also had many dear friends. The believer is never truly alone.
37. (16:27). The final doxology, the first two being 8:28–39 and 11:33–36.

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<sup>398</sup> See pp. 59–60.



# I Corinthians

## Introduction

1 Corinthians was the second letter by the Apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, following the first letter concerning separation from fornicators that has not been preserved in the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 5:9).

## Authorship

The Pauline authorship has never been seriously doubted. Internal evidence is abundant (1:1; 4:9; 15:9–10; 16:21). The external evidence is also unanimous: e.g., Clement of Rome (c. 95), Ignatius (c. 110), Polycarp (135), Justin Martyr (140), Irenaeus (175), Clement of Alexandria (200), Tertullian (200), Origen (250) and Eusebius (c. 315).

The city of Corinth was huge, and considered the fourth city of the empire for its size and significance.<sup>399</sup> It was located on a narrow isthmus between the Adriatic and Aegean Seas. It was a wicked place, indeed, the very name “Corinthian,” verbalized as κορινθιανίζω, was a synonym for debauchery. The terms Paul uses in 1 Cor. 6:9–11 reveal both female and homosexual prostitution and sinners of the worst sort.<sup>400</sup>

The Great *Akro-Korinthus*, the great, towering rocky outcropping behind the city was the shrine for Aphrodite, the goddess of sexuality, and was served by a thousand female prostitute–priestesses with shaven heads.<sup>401</sup> The church itself condoned or overlooked not only immorality, but criminal behavior.<sup>402</sup>

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<sup>399</sup> Rome was the first, premiere city of the empire, followed by the Syrian Antioch. Some have ranked the greatest cities of the ancient Roman Empire as: Ephesus, Carthage, Antioch and Alexandria by their respective populations.

<sup>400</sup> See “Notes and Observations” at the end of this section.

<sup>401</sup> For a history and description of the city and its debauchery, see pp. 155–158.

<sup>402</sup> It is significant to note that the church handled the matter before the authorities were involved. See the Excursus, “Church Discipline, Sin and Crime” in this section.

## Provenance, Date and Purpose

During his Ephesian ministry, Paul wrote two letters to the church at Corinth. The first, or “lost epistle” (1 Cor. 5:9) (c. 53–54) and the second, which we know as 1 Corinthians (c. 54). This letter reveals the trials and concerns of a church formed from and located within an extremely sinful environment in which it had to maintain the truth, a biblical morality and a scriptural testimony.

The church experienced divisions due to prominent personality influences, immorality, the concerns of Christian marriage, spiritual gifts and the issues experienced by a large city church with more than its share of nominal, questionable converts and those converted from the dregs of society.

The issues were spiritual, moral, ethical, social, marital and ecclesiastical—the whole array of problems facing Christians in an age of paganism with its complete lack of morality and decency. Hiebert notes: “We possess more detailed information about the actual conditions within the church at Corinth than about any other church in the New Testament.”<sup>403</sup>

Modern secularism has and is producing the same, at least in principle if not in practice, as a church tends to reflect the character of the society in which it is located. Further, within the context of the membership and meetings, the relative place of men and women, proper behavior and the exercise of spiritual gifts had to be delineated.

Paul received credible reports of the situation at Corinth and wrote to address the salient issues (1:10ff; 3:3–4; 4:16–21; 5:1ff; 6:1ff; 7:1ff; 8:1ff; 10:14, 27–33; 11:1ff; 12:1ff; 14:1ff). This epistle was written to correct disruptive, immoral and unethical conditions within the church; to answer questions concerning marriage, foods, worship and the resurrection; to give instructions concerning a collection for the poor believers at Jerusalem; and to thank them for their gift which a deputation had delivered.

Although the problems were manifold, the church had some outstanding members, such as Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1ff),

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<sup>403</sup> Hiebert, *Introduction to the Pauline Epistles*, p. 102.



and at least one former synagogue elder and his family (Acts 18:8). God did a great, saving work at Corinth, in spite of the contaminated, sinful environment.

### Excursus:

#### Church Discipline, Sin and Crime

Church discipline in sinful matters which cannot be handled privately (Matt. 18:15–17) must be exercised publicly in faithfulness to our Lord, the head of the church. Some disciplinary issues involve both sin and crime. The fifth chapter of this epistle is concerned with both. The sin of the man involved, according to Roman law, was the crime of incest, and so was subject to legal proceedings.

Note: The man who was cohabitating with his father's wife [γυναικα, wife," not χήρα, "widow." The father was evidently still alive] was not only indulging in gross immorality, but in criminal behavior, as marriage within the family was considered incest and thus a prosecutable crime under Roman Law [Cf. *The Institutes of Gaius*, 63].

Paul commanded that he must be disciplined or excluded from the church and its fellowship. What is important to note as a scriptural example, is that the church handled the matter spiritually and immediately, evidently before the authorities were involved. In matters where both sin and crime are involved, the church must take spiritual action, and the state left to exercise its legal action. In such matters, neither the state nor the church should be remiss.<sup>404</sup> Paul did not advise the church to simply let the state handle the situation.

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#### Excursus: Spiritual Gifts

Chapters 12–14 deal with the exercise of spiritual gifts at church meetings. It is evident that some were promoting the alleged possession of such gifts, as the resulting confusion and speaking could not be predicated of the Holy Spirit (12:3).

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<sup>404</sup> For a detailed examination of this issue, see the author's pamphlet, "Church Discipline, Sin and Crime," © 2004.

Paul lays out their proper use to maintain decency and order in the assembly (14:40). Women were forbidden to speak out or exercise any alleged gift in the public meetings, which would preclude any female leadership in doctrinal or teaching positions (14:34–36).<sup>405</sup> An interpreter had to be present, or the person remain silent, implying self-control (14:27–31). Tongues were a relatively minor gift, of a temporary nature (1 Cor. 13:8), and not the universal sign of either possessing or being filled with the Holy Spirit (12:4–11; 14:5–6, 12).<sup>406</sup>

The Corinthian tongues needed an interpreter; the Pentecostal tongues did not. Pentecost was a unique event (Acts 2:4, 8). Modern tongue-speaking is “Corinthianism,” not “Pentecostalism,” and is in error in transgressing the scriptural order, making tongues a sign of the “baptism in the Spirit,” and adding to the Word of God and leaving the canon of Scripture necessarily incomplete, if, indeed such a gift is allegedly supernatural.

### Excursus: Christian Love: An Exposition of 1 Cor. 13

The thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is known as the great love chapter of the Bible. This is a passage that should be read, re-read and studied often. Paul wrote this awesome passage in the immediate context of spiritual gifts and their exercise, and in the larger context to a church torn by divisions and destabilized by contradictions.

This glorious chapter on Christian Love was not written in a quiet, contemplative mood under ideal circumstances, but in the context of a spiritual battle for the very life of this assembly and in the midst of divisions, confusion, carnality, spiritual pride and

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<sup>405</sup> Women are not to be in leadership or exercise a teaching position within the assembly (1 Tim. 2:11–12). [The Gk. is more emphatic than the Eng. in this admonition]. The women can set examples and speak concerning practical matters (Tit. 2:3–5).

<sup>406</sup> For an extensive discussion of the work of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts and tongues, see the author’s *Catechism on Bible Doctrine*, Q. 84, pp. 158–164.

often in opposition to and in contempt for Paul himself, as reflected in both 1 and 2 Corinthians.<sup>407</sup>

The context: Chapters 12–14 are devoted to a discussion of and directions for the exercise of Spiritual Gifts.

Chapter 12: The diversity of the gifts, the unity of the assembly and its edification.

- V. 1–11: The diversity of spiritual gifts sovereignly bestowed and controlled by one Spirit—the Holy Spirit, who is non-contradictory and never the Author of confusion.
- V. 12–27: The unity of the local body. The exercise of spiritual gifts should bring unity, not division.
- V. 28–30: The gifts and their diversity are given by God. Thus, these gifts ought to have been exercised within the unity and for the blessing of the assembly. Not everyone had such gifts. Note that tongues and their interpretation are the least of these gifts.
- V. 31: The Corinthians should earnestly desire the best gifts—those which edify the assembly [ζηλοῦτε δὲ τὰ χαρίσματα τὰ κρείττονα]. Then, he will show them a more excellent way [Καὶ ἔτι καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ὁδὸν ὑμῖν δείκνυμι], the way *par excellence*.

Chapter 13: The way of true Christian love is quite distinct from the existing divisions, contentions, spiritual pride and unruly behavior. This is a necessary parenthesis detailing the exercise of the gifts and their temporary nature in the context of the superiority and permanence of true Christian love.

Note: Mark carefully that Paul moves from the 3 pers. pl. to the 1<sup>st</sup> per. sing [λαλῶ...γέγονα...ἔχω...εἶδῶ...ἔχω...ἔχω, οὐθὲν εἰμι] in 13:1–3. He uses himself as an example—even an inspired Apostle was not exempt! Note that in the first part of the chapter, he emphasizes that love is greater than even the greatest of the gifts and self-sacrifice, and in the latter part, he emphasizes that while the gifts are temporary, love is permanent.

Chapter 14: Love, the gift of tongues, prophecy and orderly behavior in the assembly.

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<sup>407</sup> See pp. 171–173 for the circumstances which called forth 2 Corinthians.

V. 1–19: Love is essential, and prophecy is a greater gift than tongues because it edifies.

V. 20–33: Order in the assembly when exercising the spiritual gifts.

V. 34–39: The biblical order is that the spiritual gifts are to be exercised only by men in the assembled church and the women are to keep silent.

V. 40: The general principle of decorum for the assembly.

The Apostle is writing under Divine inspiration. It is vitally important to understand how he develops his subject and impresses his readers with truth of God's love for the good of the church. The natural and logical division is three-fold:

- A) Spiritual Gifts, Extreme Self-Sacrifice and Christian Love (v. 1–3)
- B) A Lyrical Poem on the Character of Christian Love (v. 4–7)
- C) Temporary Spiritual Gifts and the Permanence of Christian Love (v. 8–13)

Thus, we have:

- A) The Extremity of Outward Action and the Necessity of Christian Love (v. 1–3)
- B) A Portrait of the Character and Consistency of Christian Love (v. 4–7)
- C) The Supra-Temporal Superiority of True Christian Love (v. 8–13)

### The Spiritual Necessity and Value of True Christian Love (v. 1–3)

Note: Paul uses the term ἀγάπην, which is distinctly Christian, not φιλέω, which is a more emotional term. The latter, however is used in a compound, φιλόστοργος, which denotes the affectionate love of parent to child or between siblings, a very proper term for Christian love within the assembly (Rom. 12:10).

The Spiritual Gifts of tongues are nothing but an empty sound without love. No ultimate sacrifice can compensate for such love.

### The Moral Consistency and Character of True Christian Love (v. 4–7)

*There are 8 positive characteristics of true Christian love:* (1) Love is longsuffering. (2) Love is Kind. (3) Love rejoices in the truth. (4) Love bears all things. (5) Love believes all things. (6) Love hopes all things. (7) Love endures all things. (8) Love never fails.

*There are 8 negative characteristics of true Christian love—and these negative aspects were being demonstrated in the Corinthian church!*

(1) Love does not envy. (2) Love is not lifted up with pride. (3) Love is not arrogant or conceited. (4) Love does not act improperly or rudely. (5) Love is not selfish or self-absorbed. (6) Love is not easily provoked. (7) Love keeps no record of wrong. (8) Love does not rejoice in the sinfulness of others.

### The Permanence and Priority of True Christian Love (v. 8–13)

This section reveals that the supernatural spiritual gifts were only temporary, but the graces of faith, hope and love, which are of much more importance, are permanent.

- (v. 8). A Contrast between the permanence of Christian love and the temporal nature of the spiritual gifts.
- (v. 9–10). A Contrast between the partial and the perfect,<sup>408</sup> mature or complete.
- (v. 11). The analogy of both childhood and adulthood.
- (v. 12). The analogy between the imperfection of the mirror reflection and the face-to-face reality.
- (v. 13). The Summation: The permanent graces are much more important than the temporary gifts. Love is the greatest grace and virtue of all!

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## Outline

The contents of 1 Corinthians reveal the various issues: Divisions in the Church (1:10–4:21), Disorders in the Church (5:1–6:20), Difficulties in the Church (7:1–14:40) and Disbelief in the Church (15:1–58).

### Analysis

|                               |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Introduction                  | (1:1–19)    |
| a. Salutation                 | (1:1–3)     |
| b. Thanksgiving               | (1:4–8)     |
| I. Concerning Church Factions | (1:10–4:21) |

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<sup>408</sup> The significance of “perfect” has been the subject of debate. Charismatics refer it to the end of the age, making way for the present alleged use of tongues. Cessationists hold that tongues ceased with the completion of the Scriptural canon. Others hold that this refers to the maturity of Christianity when the supernatural spiritual gifts ended.

|                                                                  |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| A. The Fact of Divisions                                         | (1:10–3:4) |
| 1. A plea for unity                                              | (1:10)     |
| 2. A credible report                                             | (1:11)     |
| 3. Personalities and a party spirit                              | (1:12–17)  |
| 4. The unifying power of the cross                               | (1:18–25)  |
| 5. Christ is all and everything                                  | (1:26–31)  |
| 6. Preaching Christ crucified                                    | (2:1–5)    |
| 7. The gospel and worldly wisdom                                 | (2:6–16)   |
| 8. Divisions reveal carnality                                    | (3:1–4)    |
| B. The Evil of Divisions                                         | (3:5–4:5)  |
| 1. Each Preacher has a distinct ministry                         | (3:5–10)   |
| 2. Reactions to the gospel message                               | (3:11–17)  |
| 3. The gospel and worldly wisdom                                 | (3:18–23)  |
| 4. The stewardship of the gospel                                 | (4:1–5)    |
| C. The Cause of Divisions                                        | (4:6–21)   |
| 1. Spiritual pride                                               | (4:6–8)    |
| 2. Failure to properly assess the ministry                       | (4:9–16)   |
| 3. Timothy and coming correction                                 | (4:17–21)  |
| II. Concerning Moral Delinquencies in the Church                 | (5:1–6:20) |
| A. With Reference to Discipline                                  | (5:1–13)   |
| 1. The necessity of church discipline                            | (5:1–8)    |
| 2. The necessity of spiritual separation                         | (5:9–13)   |
| B. With Reference to Law Suits                                   | (6:1–11)   |
| 1. Believers litigating against one another<br>before law courts | (6:1–8)    |
| 2. Those excluded from the Kingdom through<br>sin                | (6:9–11)   |
| C. With Reference to physical and ecclesiastical<br>Impurity     | (6:13–20)  |
| III. Concerning Marriage                                         | (7:1–40)   |
| A. The Lawfulness and Duties of Marriage                         | (7:1–7)    |
| B. The Consideration of Various Cases                            | (7:8–40)   |
| 1. The most basic reason for marriage                            | (7:1–2)    |
| 2. Mutual love and consideration in the<br>marriage relationship | (7:3–6)    |
| 3. A word for widows and unmarried                               | (7:7–9)    |
| 4. Divorce and remarriage                                        | (7:10–11)  |
| 5. Mixed marriages: saved and unsaved                            | (7:12–16)  |
| 6. Circumcision and uncircumcision                               | (7:17–19)  |
| 7. Slavery and freedom: literal and spiritual                    | (7:20–23)  |
| 8. Husbands, wives and virgins                                   | (7:25–33)  |

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|----------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 9. Fathers and Daughters                           | (7:34–38)    |
| 10. Marriage, death and remarriage                 | (7:39–40)    |
| IV. Concerning Food Offered to Idols               | (8:1–11:1)   |
| A. The Relation of Love to Knowledge               | (8:1–13)     |
| 1. The necessity of love                           | (8:1–3)      |
| 2. The folly and ignorance of idolatry             | (8:4–6)      |
| 3. Christian liberty and knowledge                 | (8:7–8)      |
| 4. Idolatry and the weaker brother                 | (8:9–13)     |
| B. The Principle of Self-Denial Illustrated        | (9:1–27)     |
| 1. By the Christian ministry                       | (9:1–15)     |
| 2. By selfless evangelism                          | (9:16–27)    |
| C. The Peril of Participating in Idolatrous Feasts | (10:1–14)    |
| 1. The example of national Israel                  | (10:1–5)     |
| 2. Israel: example and admonition                  | (10:6–14)    |
| D. The Lord's Supper and Idolatrous Feasts         | (10:15–22)   |
| E. The Principles of Liberty                       | (10:23–11:1) |
| 1. The reality of liberty                          | (10:23–26)   |
| 2. The restrictions on liberty                     | (10:27–11:1) |
| V. Concerning Disorders in Public Worship          | (11:2–14:40) |
| A. The Demeanor of Women                           | (11:2–16)    |
| 1. The Divine order                                | (11:2–9)     |
| 2. The Woman's covering                            | (11:10–16)   |
| B. The Lord's Supper                               | (11:17–34)   |
| 1. Church divisions and their effect               | (11:17–22)   |
| 2. The Scriptural principles                       | (11:23–34)   |
| C. The Matters Concerning Spiritual Gifts          | (12:1–14:40) |
| 1. The order of spiritual gifts                    | (12:1–11)    |
| 2. The unity of the church                         | (12:12–26)   |
| 3. The order and exercise of spiritual gifts       | (12:27–31)   |
| 4. The necessity and context of love               | (13:1–13)    |
| 5. The proper use and non-use of tongues           | (14:1–33)    |
| 6. The place of women in the assembly              | (14:34–40)   |
| VI. Concerning the Resurrection                    | (15:1–58)    |
| A. The Doctrine of the Resurrection                | (15:1–11)    |
| 1. The scriptural nature of the gospel             | (15:1–4)     |
| 2. Witnesses to the resurrection                   | (15:5–11)    |
| B. The Denial of the Resurrection                  | (15:12–19)   |
| C. The Necessity of the Resurrection               | (15:20–34)   |
| 1. The implications of the resurrection            | (15:20–28)   |
| 2. The realities of the resurrection               | (15:29–34)   |
| D. The Nature of the Resurrection                  | (15:35–50)   |

|                                                      |            |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. The resurrection and transformation               | (15:35–44) |
| 2. The Headships of the First Adam and the Last Adam | (15:45–50) |
| E. The Time of the Resurrection                      | (15:51–58) |
| 1. The eschatological resurrection                   | (15:51–53) |
| 2. A hymn of the resurrection                        | (15:54–58) |
| VII. Concerning Practical and Personal Matters       | (16:1–20)  |
| A. The Collection for the Poor Saints                | (16:1–2)   |
| B. The Representatives to Accompany Paul             | (16:3–5)   |
| C. Personal and Traveling Matters                    | (16:6–18)  |
| Concluding Salutations                               | (16:19–24) |

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:10). The unity of the church—the local assembly or gathered church—is of the greatest concern to experience God’s blessings. Doctrinal orthodoxy, enthusiastic evangelism or an abundance of activities can never substitute for the spiritual unity of a church.
2. (1:11). A church’s reputation is of the utmost importance! Let it be gospel-centered, faithful, loving and unified, and its testimony will be broadcast in blessing (Rom. 1:8; Eph. 1:15; Col. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:3).
3. (1:18–24). The preaching of the cross is the power of God. It brings to naught the alleged wisdom of man. The gospel alone transforms lives and society.
4. (2:1–5). It is not oratorical gifts or philosophical prowess, but preaching Christ that God designs to bless. A man’s ministry must be gauged by his faithfulness to the gospel.
5. (3:1–7). The Corinthians were not called carnal because they indulged themselves in sinful activities, but because they looked to men and indulged in hero-worship rather than looking to Christ.
6. (3:8–15). God calls to specific ministries. Some are planters; others are builders. The issue is faithfulness to our Lord to His inscripturated Word.
7. (4:7). Distinguishing grace. Who we are, what we are and what God might do in and through us is ever and always by grace alone.



8. (4:9–13). True, consecrated Christian service is ever Christ-centered. And because it is, then God gives grace for the trials and opposition.
9. (5:1–13). A sad chapter! God has called us unto holiness, and there is no substitute! A spiritually-crippled Christian or church must be bereft of God's blessing.
10. (6:9–10). Paul uses specific terms for homosexuals: "effeminate" [μαλακοὶ], "soft," a passive, homosexual prostitute, "abusers of themselves with mankind" [ἁρσενοκοῖται], an aggressive homosexual. He follows with a list of habitual or characteristic sinners.
11. (6:15–16). Note that Paul refers to two "becoming one flesh" to a one-time illicit sexual liaison with another.
12. (7:1ff). Salvation does not guarantee a congenial marriage relationship. It provides another front through which the devil may gain an advantage. True, godly love must manifest itself in care, concern, understanding and giving up of one's self.
13. (7:12–16). The marriage of a saved person to an unsaved person is disobedience. When the Lord converts one marriage partner but not the other, then the spiritual dimension is changed to evangelism.
14. (7:18–19). Paul did not approve of *epispasm*, a common surgical procedure by young Jewish men to reverse circumcision.<sup>409</sup>
15. (7:23). This verse changed the life of Father Charles Chiniquay (1809–1899), a Canadian Romish priest. He was excommunicated from the Catholic Church.
16. (8:4–13). For notes on Christian liberty, see p. 262 under "Notes and Observations" on Romans.
17. (9:1–14). It is in the Divine order, illustrated from the Old Testament, that those who preach the gospel should be compensated. Yes such may be refused if it hinders the gospel of Christ.

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<sup>409</sup> See pp. 83–84.

18. (9:19–23). The burden of the gospel determines the life of the minister.
19. (10:1ff). It is not sufficient to be numbered outwardly with God's people. There is no escaping Divine judgment by a mere outward profession.
20. (10:26–33). The glory of God is the *summum bonum*, or highest good. Self must never get in the way of God's glory.
21. (11:1ff). God's blessings are upon obedience to the Divinely-established order, whether it be in the marriage or in the church.
22. (11:20–34). The Lord's Supper is a maintenance ordinance, to be observed regularly. "This do in remembrance of me" implies that we may, indeed, forget our Lord! Is not this the bane of many churches, religious organizations and groups?
23. (12:1ff). Spiritual gifts are given by the Spirit for exercise within the assembly and its unified witness and edification. If there is any confusion or disunity, the alleged gifts are artificial and not of God.
24. (13:1ff). True, godly, Christian love is the one abiding, continual reality which distinguishes true, biblical Christianity.
25. (14:1ff). Spiritual gifts are to be exercised by the prompting of the Spirit, are limited to the men, and are to be exercised in harmony and with proper decorum.
26. (14:34–40). A thought: If the men took the leadership and were responsible, the women might not be so ardent of making up the lack of spiritual leadership.
27. (15:1ff). True, biblical faith has a necessary eschatological aspect. The Christian's hope possesses both a desire and a certainty. Such a perspective enables us to put religious tradition and current issues and trials into the right perspective.
28. (16:9). Every great opportunity must present its share of obstacles. The devil is real and he must oppose any and all gospel advances.

## II Corinthians

2 Corinthians was the third letter written by Paul to the Corinthian church.<sup>410</sup> This is the most personal and revealing of Paul's letters and was written in a time of church crisis and contention. A general comparison of 1 and 2 Corinthians is given in the following chart.<sup>411</sup>

| <b>A Comparison of 1 &amp; 2 Corinthians</b>                |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 Corinthians</b>                                        | <b>2 Corinthians</b>                            |
| Objective & Practical                                       | Subjective & Personal                           |
| Insight into the Character of an Early Church               | Insight into the Character and Ministry of Paul |
| Deliberate, Authoritative Instruction                       | Impassioned Personal and Doctrinal Testimony    |
| Warnings against Pagan and Immoral Influences and Practices | Warnings against Judaistic Influences and Pride |

### Authorship

Internal evidence is found in the apostolic salutation (1:1), a personal declaration (10:1), and in the abundant personal history and experiences of the Apostle (e.g., 11:21ff). External evidence is abundant in early Christian and Gnostic writings: Clement of Rome (95), Polycarp (135), the Muratorian fragment (c. 170), Irenaeus (175), Clement of Alexandria (200), Tertullian (200), and Marcion the Gnostic's *Apostolicon* (c. 140).<sup>412</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> See pp. 171–173.

<sup>411</sup> *Jensen's Survey of the New Testament*, p. 285.

<sup>412</sup> Marcion the Gnostic edited and revised some of the New Testament writings to conform to his doctrinal teachings—an inadvertent witness to their previous existence and authenticity prior to Marcion.

## Provenance, Purpose and Date

2 Corinthians was written from Philippi after the report of Titus to prepare the church for Paul's intended visit;<sup>413</sup> to express his rejoicing over the obedience of the majority to the truth; to urge them to complete the offering for the poor believers at Jerusalem; and to vindicate his apostleship against the charges of the Judaizers and their legalism (Cf. Acts 15:1). They had attacked his ministry, his doctrine and his character. He was forced to defend himself on all accounts. This makes this letter one of his most personal, revealing things not only about himself, but also other trials and adverse experiences which are listed only here (e.g., 11:23–28).

Internal and external evidence makes the date of 56–57 AD most probable. He wrote 2 Corinthians a short time before the letter to the Romans.<sup>414</sup>

## Outline

The major divisions may be stated in a four-fold manner:

1. Paul's Defense of his Conduct (1:3–2:11)
2. Paul's Defense of his Ministry (2:12–7:16)
3. Paul's Defense of the Collection (8:1–9:15)
4. Paul's Defense of his Apostleship (10:1–12:13)

A simplified three-fold outline of the substance of this epistle might be:

- A) Paul and His Commission (1:3–5:20)
- B) Paul and His Converts (6:1–9:15)
- C) Paul and His Critics (10:1–13:10)

## Analysis

Introduction (1:1–11)

- A. Salutation from Paul and Timothy (1:1–2)
- B. Consolation in Suffering (1:3–11)

I. Consolation: Paul's Trials and Comforts as a Preacher

- A. A Defense of His Conduct (1:12–7:16)

- A. A Defense of His Conduct (1:13–2:11)

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<sup>413</sup> For historical context, see pp. 171–173.

<sup>414</sup> 2 Corinthians was written from Philippi before his intended visit to Corinth. Romans was later written from Corinth.

|                                                                         |              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Paul's Explanation                                                   | (1:13–24)    |
| 2. Paul's Vindication                                                   | (2:1–11)     |
| B. A Defense of His Ministry                                            | (2:12–7:16)  |
| 1. The Nature of the Ministry                                           | (2:4–3:18)   |
| 2. The Sincerity of the Ministry                                        | (4:1–6)      |
| 3. The Perseverance of the Ministry                                     | (4:7–15)     |
| 4. The Prospect of the Ministry                                         | (4:16–5:10)  |
| 5. The Sanctions of the Ministry                                        | (5:11–19)    |
| 6. The Example of the Ministry                                          | (5:20–6:10)  |
| 7. The Appeal of the Ministry                                           | (6:11–7:3)   |
| II. Solicitation: Paul's Plea Concerning the Collection                 | (8:1–9:15)   |
| A. Example of the Macedonians                                           | (8:1–7)      |
| 1. An Explanation of Giving                                             | (8:1)        |
| 2. The Circumstances of Giving                                          | (8:2)        |
| 3. The Manner of Giving                                                 | (8:3–4)      |
| 4. The Method of Giving                                                 | (8:5)        |
| 5. The Result of Giving                                                 | (8:6–8)      |
| B. Example of the Lord Jesus Christ                                     | (8:8–15)     |
| C. The Testimony of Titus and Macedonians                               | (8:16–9:5)   |
| 1. Commendation                                                         | (8:16–24)    |
| 2. Explanation                                                          | (9:1–5)      |
| D. The Blessings of Giving                                              | (9:6–15)     |
| 1. A plentiful harvest from abundant sowing                             | (9:6)        |
| 2. A token of Divine love in cheerful giving                            | (9:7–11)     |
| 3. Ministering to the needs of the saints and receiving God's blessings | (9:12–15)    |
| III. Vindication: Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Authority             | (10:1–13:10) |
| A. A Defense of His Authority                                           | (10:1–18)    |
| 1. Paul's authority was spiritual                                       | (10:1–6)     |
| 2. Paul's authority was Divinely-given                                  | (10:7–18)    |
| B. A Defense of His Self-Supporting Work                                | (11:1–5)     |
| 1. His godly jealousy                                                   | (11:1–2)     |
| 2. The danger of spiritual seduction                                    | (11:3–15)    |
| C. A Revelation of His Sufferings                                       | (11:16–33)   |
| 1. The answer to the Judaistic boasters                                 | (11:16–22)   |
| 2. An enumeration of his sufferings                                     | (11:23–33)   |
| D. A Revelation of His Physical Weakness                                | (12:1–10)    |
| 1. Paul's transcendent revelation                                       | (12:1–6)     |
| 2. Paul's disciplinary humility                                         | (12:7–10)    |
| E. A Revelation of His Miracles                                         | (12:11–13)   |

|                                              |               |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Paul's apostolic power and humility       | (12:11)       |
| 2. Paul's apostolic credentials              | (12:12–13)    |
| F. A Defense of His Proposed Visit           | (12:14–13:10) |
| 1. Paul's anticipation and attitude          | (12:14–15)    |
| 2. Paul's denial of personal advantage       | (12:16–19)    |
| 3. Paul's fear for the future                | (12:20–21)    |
| 4. Paul's vindication of apostolic authority | (13:1–4)      |
| 5. Paul's exhortation to self-examination    | (13:5)        |
| 6. Paul's assertion of his authority         | (13:6–10)     |
| Conclusion                                   | (13:11–14)    |
| A. Closing exhortation to unity              | (13:11–12)    |
| B. Closing benediction                       | (13:13–14)    |

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:3–4). True Christian comfort is first received then extended if it is true and from God. Note the vital place for personal Christian experience.
2. (1:8–11). Intercessory prayer for missionaries and Christian brethren in other locations is a necessary and glorious ministry to be taken with the utmost seriousness.
3. (1:17–20). There is no indefiniteness in the message of the truth as it is in the Lord Jesus Christ. It must be preached with definiteness, clarity and authority.
4. (2:1–4). True pastors, despite their authority, must be tender-hearted and compassionate, even toward those who cause problems.
5. (2:5–11). Sadly, reconciliation is rare among even true believers. This reveals a lack of true godly love, compassion and hope.
6. (2:14–17). The imagery of a Roman Triumph after a hard-fought campaign when the victorious general entered Rome with his captives led to the slaughter. Spiritually, however the imagery is unto life and victory in the cause of Christ.
7. (3:1–5). Paul needed no letter of recommendation, as the Corinthians themselves were such to him as a result of his faithful ministry among them.
8. (3:6–16). The contrast is between the Old and New Covenants, between the law written on stone and now

written on the heart. The New or Gospel Covenant greatly exceeds the Old in glory and effectiveness.

9. (3:17–18). The imagery is from the coppersmiths and metallurgists of Corinth. Men's mirrors were made of polished bronze, in the shape of a pentagram, with a handle. The face of the mirror had the outline of one's god etched on it. A man would look at it and seek to conform his features to that of his god. Paul spiritualizes this to seeing the Lord Jesus and spiritually seeking to be conformed to His image by the grace of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:29).
10. (4:1–2). The moral and spiritual description of the Christian minister. Not gifts, but graces are the most important!
11. (4:4–6). Salvation—namely regeneration—explained under the figure of creation—a sovereign act of God.
12. (4:7). The preacher is nothing but a clay pot—expendable, worth little—but if faithful to the gospel, filled with glorious treasure! It is not the man, but the message.
13. (4:7–16). The characteristic sufferings and adversities of the ministry. Only truly God-called and God-graced and God-gifted men are so suited to endure and succeed.
14. (4:17–18). Paul's personal perspective. He counted his present sufferings, which were often horrible, to be light and temporary compared to the eternal blessedness and glory which awaited him. His secret to perseverance and faithfulness.
15. (5:1–10). Longing for heaven is a true and abiding hope—if we are living in persevering and faithful service here and now.
16. (5:11). Not the love of the Lord, but His terror! How little men know of the God of the Bible! If all we see and know is God's love then our concept of God is awfully deficient! He also absolutely holy and righteous—and final judgment will not be in terms of love, but His moral self-consistency.
17. (5:14–15). The reality of the believer's union with Christ in the context of the atonement and the binding obligation it assumes over the believer (Cf. Rom. 5:12–18).

18. (5:16–17). Our Lord is no longer the Jesus who walked among men, but the exalted Lord of glory. Such a transformation is to be realized in every believer.
19. (5:18–20). Believers, especially preachers, are ambassadors for Christ, and have been given the ministry of reconciliation.
20. (5:21). One of the great inclusive statements concerning the vicarious sacrifice of our Lord, emphasizing the imputation of our sins to the Savior and His righteousness imputed to us.
21. (6:1). It is possible to receive the grace of God in vain. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:1–2; Heb. 10:38–39. Nominal or mere professing “Christians” are the bane of religion.
22. (6:3–10). The sufferings, misunderstandings and liabilities of the gospel ministry. How few truly comprehend such!
23. (6:14–18). Biblical separation pertains not only to marriage, but to relationships which breed compromise and neutralize one’s testimony.
24. (7:1). A general admonition to holiness of life and progression.
25. (7:3–16). The circumstances under which this letter was written from Philippi to anticipate Paul’s arrival at Corinth.
26. (8:1–9:15). How to take an offering: (1) The example of others. (2) The glorious example of our Lord. (3) An equity among believers. (4) Corporate honesty. (5) A loving motive. (6) A proof of one’s love. (7) A reputation for liberality before God. (8) Cheerfulness in giving. (9) The anticipation of blessing.
27. (10:3–5). Apologetic methodology: “casting down imaginations,” lit: “logical arguments dismantling” [λογισμοὺς καθαιροῦντες].
28. (10:12). Subjective self-measurement may be completely wrong and inherently defective, especially in spiritual matters.
29. (11:3–4). There is “another [ἕτερον εὐαγγέλιον, ὃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἄλλο] gospel” (Gal. 1:6–7) [ἡ εὐαγγέλιον ἕτερον]. Two



different terms for “another,” one meaning another of a different kind and another term meaning “another of the same kind,” making the statement in Gal. 1:6 very strong, as here. The Judaizers, preaching legalism and the necessity of circumcision were declaring another gospel which was false and graceless.

30. (11:13–15). The subtlety of Satan, an inspired comment on his “wiles” [τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου] (Eph. 6:11). The devil is a “methodist,” and we are to know his methodology.
31. (11:22–33). A list of Paul’s sufferings, beatings, trials and extremes for the sake of the gospel. Most unrecorded, except here.<sup>415</sup>
32. (12:1–10). Paul’s transcendent, mysterious entrance into the third heaven, and the resulting chronic illness which continually humbled him lest he become lifted up. This necessarily occurred well before his stoning at Lystra.<sup>416</sup>
33. (12:12). Paul defends his apostleship with impeccable and self-evident credentials.
34. (12:15). The very heart of the Apostle Paul laid open—the extreme, selfless testimony of a true minister.
35. (13:5). Some among the Corinthians had despised and ridiculed Paul, and sought to discredit him. Now, he challenges them to a stringent self-examination.
36. (13:10). His final admonition. He has been stringent toward them so he would not have to be so when he finally came to them personally.

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<sup>415</sup> See pp. 68–70.

<sup>416</sup> See pp. 42, 85, 211.



## Galatians

### Introduction

The Epistle to the Galatians (49–50) was the first recorded Pauline letter and the second letter written in the New Testament. The Epistle of James was written some four years earlier (c. 44).<sup>417</sup> The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to those he had evangelized on his first missionary journey in the southern area of the province of Galatia. Together with 2 Corinthians, Galatians is the most impassioned letter of the Pauline corpus.

This letter, championing the grace of God against legalism and justification by works, has been called “The *Magna Carta* of Christian Liberty.” Martin Luther wrote: “The Epistle to the Galatians is my Epistle; I have betrothed myself to it; it is my wife.” Galatians settles once and for all the issue of salvation by grace as contrasted with salvation by works, or an admixture of the two.

### Authorship

The Pauline authorship of Galatians has never been seriously doubted, even among most of the radical biblical critics. The Gnostic Marcion placed it first in his canon, and the early Church Fathers were unanimous in ascribing it to Paul.

### Destination

Who were the Galatians? The name refers to the warlike Celtic tribes of ancient Gaul in Western Europe. These people were engaged in a war with Rome c. 390 BC, and eventually migrated into Macedonia and Greece, finally settling in Asia Minor. In 189 BC the Romans subdued the Gauls. At the death of Amyntas, their last king, Augustus turned the territory into a Roman Province named Galatia. This territory was enlarged to include an area to the south of the original Galatian region.<sup>418</sup>

The date and readers of the Galatian Epistle are determined by the usage of the term “Galatia.” If Paul were referring to the

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<sup>417</sup> See p. 43.

<sup>418</sup> See Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, pp. 74–75.

northern portion of the Roman province, then Galatians would have been written later, c. 56–57, forming both a logical and historical introduction to Romans (the “Northern Galatian theory”),<sup>419</sup> but if referring to the whole Roman Province, including the southern portion, then the “Churches of Galatia” would refer to the area of his first missionary journey (the “Southern Galatian theory”).<sup>420</sup> This latter view, which internal evidence seems to substantiate, would necessitate the earlier date.<sup>421</sup>

The determining factors concerning “Galatia” are two: first, was Paul referring to the geographical or ethnographic region of Galatia or to the Roman Province of Galatia? If the former, then the northern region was intended; if the latter, then the southern region would be included. Paul’s other references were to Roman provinces, not ethnographic regions.

Second, The confrontation between Paul and Peter had to occur before the church conference of Acts 15, as Paul would have necessarily made reference to it and to Peter’s bold stand at that time.<sup>422</sup> It would be unthinkable for Paul to have omitted such a reference and the determination of the conference.

### Provenance, Date and Purpose

As in the Epistle of James, this letter deals with justification and the Law. The clarification of this issue was vital to the purity of the grace of the gospel and the definitive separation between Christianity and Judaistic legalism. The Judaizers had followed Paul’s ministry into Galatia and sought to subvert the churches.

### Excursus: the Law

There are seven different uses of the term “law” in Scripture and these must be studied to be consistent: (1) The Pentateuch, or

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<sup>419</sup> The Northern Galatian theory held sway until about the middle of the twentieth century. The Southern Galatian theory now predominates.

<sup>420</sup> See p. 43.

<sup>421</sup> See Merrill C. Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, pp. 268–270; Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, pp. 74–83.

<sup>422</sup> See pp. 91–93.

five books of Moses. (2) The whole Mosaic Legislation. (3) The term “Law” used anarth.<sup>423</sup> refers to a principle of command, i.e., law as a kind or type of command, a principle of law or external command. (4) Human law or custom. This may refer to the human legal system of a given culture and society, or to a general principle founded as a human institution (Rom. 7:1–3). (5) Various principles or powers of operation that exist in the created spiritual or moral order of things, e.g., the “law” of faith, the “law” of the mind, the “law” of sin. In this usage, the word “principle” could be substituted for the word “law.” (6) The Moral Law as epitomized in its positive form as consummate love to the Lord God and to one’s neighbor or fellow man (Matt. 22:36–40). (7) The Decalogue or Ten Commandments—a codification and epitome of the “Moral Law” in its largely negative form (Ex. 20:1–17).

The exposition of “the Law” in this epistle must not be misunderstood. Some would take this in the context of sanctification rather than justification and pose an antinomian context. The historical and doctrinal context concerned the Judaizers who taught the necessity of circumcision for salvation (Acts 15:1ff). The Apostle’s use of the term “Law” in this epistle is inclusive of circumcision and the Mosaic institutions, and thus has reference to justification, not sanctification. It is not an attempt to set aside the Moral Law of God. “The Law was and is, i.e., continues to be [...ὁ νόμος παιδαγωγὸς ἡμῶν γέγονεν εἰς Χριστόν... perf.] our schoolmaster to lead us unto Christ” (Gal. 3:24).

Every generation seems to witness a revival of the “Law–Grace” controversy. Most are varied views which tend toward legalism, Dispensationalism or antinomianism. The latest is “New Covenant Theology” [NCT], which holds that with the death of our Lord the Moral Law was abrogated and is no longer

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<sup>423</sup> *Anarthrous*, i.e., without the def, article, e.g., Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18 which refer to a principle of command.

relevant.<sup>424</sup> This movement began as a reaction against the perpetual relevance of the Moral Law.

This is simply an antinomian position. It makes no distinction between the civil law, the ceremonial law and the Moral Law. The first two have been fulfilled and became obsolete through the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Moral Law [Ten Commandments, Decalogue], as the expression of the righteous character of God remains.<sup>425</sup> Sin is defined by God's Law.

NCT holds that this law was a legal document given to Israel at Sinai and has no present bearing on Christians or mankind. The New Testament refutes such a claim: the law answers to the law indelibly inscribed upon the hearts of all men, rendering them morally-responsible and accountable to God (Rom. 2:11–16), is the God-ordained medium for the conviction of sin (Acts 9:5; Gal. 3:24; Rom. 7:7–13), is the standard for Christian love (Rom. 13:8–10) and is (Jas. 2:8–12) and will be the final standard of judgment upon all men (Rom. 3:19–20).

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## Outline

The Galatian Epistle may be outlined in a three-fold manner:

- A) An Explanation: Personal (Chapters 1–2)
- B) An Exposition: Doctrinal (Chapters 3–4)
- C) An Exhortation: Practical (Chapters 5–6)

With the truth and liberty of the gospel as the major theme, the following outline is suggested:

- A) The Authenticity of the Gospel (Chapters 1–2)
- B) The Superiority of the Gospel (Chapters 3–4)
- C) The True Liberty of the Gospel (Chapters 5–6)

## Analysis

|               |          |
|---------------|----------|
| Introduction  | (1:1–10) |
| A. Salutation | (1:1–5)  |

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<sup>424</sup> For a thorough discussion of NCT, see Alan Cairns, *Dictionary of Theological Terms*, pp. 303–306.

<sup>425</sup> See W. R. Downing, *Survey of the Bible: Old Testament*, I, pp. 110–114.

- B. A Rebuke and Warning (1:6–10)
- I. Personal: The Vindication of Paul's Apostolic Authority: An Independent Revelation (1:11–2:21)
  - A. Independent of Human Teaching (v. 11–17)
    - 1. Origin of Paul's gospel: Divine revelation (1:11–12)
    - 2. Past conduct and Divine revelation (1:13–17)
  - B. Independent of Judean Churches (v. 18–24)
    - 1. First visit to Jerusalem (1:18–20)
    - 2. Silent years in Cilicia (1:21–24)
  - C. Independent of Judaizing Brethren (2:1–10)
    - 1. First attempt of the Judaizers (2:1–5)
    - 2. The initial division of Gentile and Jewish ministry (2:6–10)
  - D. Independent of Apostolic Pressure (2:11–14)
  - E. Independent of Selfish Interest (2:15–21)
    - 1. An explanation of the issue (2:15–19)
    - 2. Life in Christ by grace (2:20–21)
- II. Doctrinal: Justification by Faith: The Failure of Legalism (3:1–4:31)
  - A. The Holy Spirit received by faith (3:1–5)
    - 1. Galatians called to remember their beginning (3:1–2)
    - 2. The contradiction of returning to law–works (3:3–5)
  - B. Abraham justified by faith (3: 6–9)
    - 1. The example of Abraham (3:6–7)
    - 2. The children of Abraham (3:8–9)
  - C. The Law curses; it cannot justify (3:10–14)
    - 1. The works of the law under a curse (3:10)
    - 2. Christ has redeemed us from this curse (3:11–14)
  - D. The Law cannot annul the promise (3:15–18)
  - E. The purpose of the Law (3:19–24)
    - 1. Preparatory to the gospel historically (3:19–23)
    - 2. Preparatory to the gospel evangelically (3:24)
  - F. Faith the superior condition (3:25–4:7)
    - 1. Position in Christ: no distinction (3:25–29)
    - 2. Illustration of the minor heir (4:1–2)
    - 3. Application to believers (4:3–6)
    - 4. Through Christ, an heir and son (4:7)
  - G. Legalism not better than paganism (4:8–10)
  - H. His original contact with the Galatians recounted (4:11–18)
    - 1. Their past conduct and devotion (4:11–16)
    - 2. Appeal for consistency (4:17–18)

|                                                                    |            |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| I. The two covenants contrasted: an allegory                       | (4:19–31)  |
| III. Practical: The Life and Effect of Christian Liberty           | (5:1–6:10) |
| A. Danger and meaning of falling from grace                        | (5:1–12)   |
| 1. An admonition to maintain their liberty                         | (5:1)      |
| 2. The consequences of circumcision                                | (5:2–3)    |
| 3. Departing from the principle of grace                           | (5:4)      |
| 4. The confidence of justification by faith                        | (5:5–6)    |
| 5. Judgment upon the Judaistic seducer                             | (5:7–10)   |
| 6. The offense of the cross                                        | (5:11)     |
| 7. A wish for Judaizers to be consistent                           | (5:12)     |
| B. The Law of love                                                 | (5:13–15)  |
| 1. The law of liberty is a manifest love                           | (5:13–14)  |
| 2. Contention stands again both law and love                       | (5:15)     |
| C. The conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh                   | (5:16–26)  |
| 1. The preventative of walking in the Spirit                       | (5:16–18)  |
| 2. The works of the flesh                                          | (5:19–21)  |
| 3. The fruit of the Spirit                                         | (5:22–23)  |
| 4. Living and walking in the Spirit                                | (5:24–26)  |
| D. The true marks of spirituality                                  | (6:1–10)   |
| 1. Meekness in restoration                                         | (6:1)      |
| 2. Burden-bearing                                                  | (6:2–5)    |
| 3. An exhortation to communicate with their teachers               | (6:6)      |
| 4. Sowing and reaping a spiritual principle from the natural realm | (6:7–8)    |
| 5. Plea for a persevering and benevolent behavior                  | (6:9–10)   |
| Conclusion                                                         | (6:11–17)  |
| 1. A personal reference to Paul's disability                       | (6:11)     |
| 2. The hypocrisy of the Judaizers                                  | (6:12–13)  |
| 3. True spiritual separation                                       | (6:14)     |
| 4. Spiritual transformation: the work of grace, not circumcision   | (6:15–16)  |
| 5. True spiritual <i>stigmata</i>                                  | (6:17)     |
| Benediction                                                        | (6:18)     |

### Notes and Observations

- (1:4). True salvation, evidenced by conversion, is manifested spiritually, religiously, morally, ethically and socially.
- (1:6–9). The Gk. uses two different terms for “another,” revealing the issue: ἕτερος, another of a different kind and ἄλλος, another of the same kind. “Another gospel of a



different kind, which is not at all a gospel of the same kind.” Paul used strong words for the false or perverted [μεταστρέψαι] “gospel” of the Judaizers, and pronounced the strongest curse upon those who proclaimed it.

3. (1:11–12). Paul’s gospel. It had been revealed to him personally by the glorified Lord Jesus Christ. It was a gospel of free and sovereign grace and stood utterly opposed to works and circumcision.
4. (1:15–16). The Divine purpose was one and embracing in Paul’s life: birth, rearing, calling, ministry.
5. (1:17). The one reference to Paul’s three years in Arabia immediately after his conversion [omitted in Acts]. There God taught the gospel, its fullness and implications. It was his three years in “seminary training.”<sup>426</sup>
6. (2:1ff). The reference is to Paul’s second trip to Jerusalem since his conversion when he and Barnabas traveled to Jerusalem with aid for the saints. Titus is not mentioned in Acts, so the initial time of his relation to and sojourn with Paul is unknown. The ministry was divided between Jewish and Gentile.
7. (2:20). This prominent statement by the Apostle was made in a time of crisis, confrontation and controversy. Such is rarely considered. Note the perf. tense [Χριστῷ συνεσταύρωμαι], “with Christ I have been and continue as co-crucified.” This reveals and sums up the whole life of Paul, and gives an insight into his life, ministry and sufferings.
8. (2:21). This must not be taken out of context, as though the grace of God can be frustrated in His attempts to save sinners. Paul’s argument is that if righteousness could be procured through obedience to the law, then Our Lord’s death had no purpose.

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<sup>426</sup> See pp. 80–82 for Paul’s experience and Divine education in Arabia.

9. (3:1ff). The contrast is between law or works–righteousness and faith–righteousness. Paul will repeat this argument in Rom. 4, again using Abraham as the great example.
10. (3:13). Note that Christ has not redeemed us from the law, i.e., antinomianism, but from its curse.
11. (3:16). Note the careful exegesis of Paul. In Gen. 22:18 the word “seed” is sing. [בְּזֶרְעֶךָ].<sup>427</sup> Paul states that this refers, not to Abraham’s descendents in general, i.e., the nation of Israel, but to Christ.
12. (3:24). Mark the perf. tense: “The law was and continues to be our schoolmaster...” [ἡ γέγονεν]. The evangelical preaching of the law prepares for the reception of gospel–righteousness.<sup>428</sup>
13. (3:25–29). This unity refers to that which is spiritual. How different would our churches be if all considered themselves to be and treated others as brothers and sisters in the Lord with love and true affection! (Jn. 13:34–35; Rom. 12:9–10; 1 Cor. 12:12–27).
14. (4:1–31). When Paul speaks of the law, he is not referring to the Moral Law, but to the whole Mosaic legislation of the Old Covenant, i.e., circumcision, observances, various feasts, etc., which either passed away or were fulfilled in Christ (1 Cor. 5:6–8).<sup>429</sup> The issue is justification, not sanctification; one’s legal standing, not antinomianism. There is no antinomian grace.

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<sup>427</sup> Gen. 22:18, בְּזֶרְעֶךָ is masc. sing. const. state, “in your seed.” The root is זָרַע, “seed.” Lxx: ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου, masc. sing.

<sup>428</sup> The reader is referred to the masterful work, *The Christian Ministry* by Charles Bridges and the section on “The Scriptural Mode of Preaching the Law, pp. 222–238.

<sup>429</sup> Such reasoning and arguments comprise the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, revealing the superiority of Christ over the prophets, Angels, Moses and the Aaronic Priesthood.

15. (5:1ff). To submit to circumcision as necessary to salvation necessarily meant to submit to the whole law, i.e., to become a Jew, not a Christian.
16. (5:4). “Falling from grace,” i.e., losing one’s salvation, a doctrine of perfectionist and Arminian thinking, is a fallacy which cancels out the glory and efficacy of our Lord’s redemptive work and misrepresents the very nature of saving faith and the work of the Holy Spirit. What Paul meant was that these had fallen away from the very *principle* of salvation by grace through faith.  
 Note: One should carefully study Eph. 1:3–14, the single most profound sentence [of 202 words] in the Scriptures, which is a eulogy to the glory of the eternal redemptive purpose and the efficacious work of the triune Godhead in our salvation.<sup>430</sup>
17. (5:11–12). “Cut off” [root: ἀποκόπτω] refers to the emasculation [castration] of heathen priests and eunuchs. Those who make circumcision [root: περιτομή, lit. a cutting around], a cutting in the flesh, necessary to salvation, should do the greater and be castrated. Strong language in the defense of salvation by grace!
18. (5:13–26). The contrast is between the works of the flesh [what the flesh produces] and the fruit of the Spirit [what the Holy Spirit produces]. The Judaizers’ influence and their confusion had produced the works of the flesh and not the fruit of the Spirit.
19. (5:22–23). The nine-fold fruit of the Spirit. This is what the Holy Spirit produces in the life of the believer and what He produces in the fellowship of believers. This list should be memorized and studied repeatedly. True, godly unity and reconciliation is exceedingly rare among professed Christians!
20. (5:23). “Temperance” [ἐγκράτεια, power over one’s *ego*] is self-control, not any reference to abstaining from alcohol, which is abstinence, not temperance. The emotionally–

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<sup>430</sup> See pp. 300, 302–303 for a commentary on Eph. 1:3–14.

charged charismatics, those who are given to ecstatic utterances and those who characteristically indulge themselves in ecclesiastical disputes are often very guilty of lacking self-control!

21. (6:1). There is often a lack of the spirit of meekness among believers, even among those who consider themselves to be “spiritual.” Legalism is not spirituality, neither is a weak conscience.
22. (6:2–5). There is no contradiction [the Scriptures are *coherent*, i.e., contain no contradiction]. Two terms for “burdens”: v. 2 [rt: βάρος]; v. 5 [rt: φορτίον]. Bear one another’s overpowering burdens...but every man must bear his own individual responsibility [“shoulder his own pack”].
23. (6:6). The two terms, “taught” and teacheth” are forms of the word *katacheō* [κατηχέω], the source of our term, “catechism.”

Note: The English word “catechism” is derived from the Gk. verb κατηχέω, “to resound, teach orally, instruct by mouth.” This term originally had the idea of “speaking down or from above” i.e., from actors on an elevated stage. It is a compound of the preposition *kata*, “down, throughout, thoroughly” and the verb *ēchēō*, “to sound,” the source of our English word, “echo.” There seems to be in this etymology the idea of a responsive answer. Catechizing has the connotation of thorough or repeated oral instruction, and is only one of several related terms for instruction or teaching found in Scripture. The term κατηχέω itself occurs eight times in the New Testament: Lk. 1:4; Acts 18:25; 21:21, 24; Rom. 2:18; 1 Cor. 14:19; Gal. 6:6.

24. (6:7–10). The law of sowing and reaping in the created order is the same in the physical and spiritual realms. This is written by way of encouragement.
25. (6:11). A reference to Paul’s difficulty, either from *ophthalmia* or his arthritis, or both. The references to his

eyes (Gal. 4:15) and his use of amanuenses for his letters indicate a diseased eyesight and arthritic hands.<sup>431</sup>

26. (6:12–16). The final comment on circumcision and its uselessness under the Gospel Covenant.
27. (6:14). Paul's world-and-Life-View: This settled everything and formed the *pou stō* of his life and ministry (cf. 2:20).

Note: The language of philosophy and apologetics. The *pou stō* [ποῦ στῶ] is one's point-of-reference, lit: "a place where I might stand..." one's presuppositions from which he exists, lives and labors. His view of himself in reference to God and the universe. This was first used by Archimedes the Greek mathematician and inventor (c. 287–212 BC), who stated, "Give me a place to stand and a level long enough, and I will move the world."<sup>432</sup>

28. (6:17). The marks [στίγματα]<sup>433</sup> of the Lord Jesus referred literally and physically to his body scarred from the beatings and abuse he had already endured, and possibly to his poor eyesight, if his disease could be traced to the glory of the risen Lord and his subsequent blindness (Acts 9:1–17).

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<sup>431</sup> For *ophthalmia* and Paul's arthritic hands, see pp. 50, 53–54, 186, 221, 240.

<sup>432</sup> ὁός μοι ποῦ στῶ. See Abraham Kuyper, *Principles of Sacred Theology*, p. 113; Robert L. Reymond, *The Justification of Knowledge*, p. 30; *A New Systematic Theology*, p. 111; Paul S. Nelson, *Presuppositionalism: A Biblical Approach to Apologetics*, pp.158, 177–180.

<sup>433</sup> For the significance of the various *stigmata*, see p. 53.



## Ephesians

### Introduction

Ephesians is the first in the canonical order of the “Prison Epistles” of Paul.

Ephesians has been called “one of the most significant documents ever written” (O’Brian), “The Divinest composition of man,” “the crown and climax of Pauline Theology,” “The distilled essence of the Christian religion, the most authoritative and most consummate compendium of our Holy Christian Faith,” (Lloyd-Jones); “The Grand Canyon of Scripture” (Paxon). This letter is rich and profound, yet also practical and experiential.

While the Epistle to the Romans is the broadest in scope and filled with the truth of Divine righteousness in the gospel, the Epistle to the Ephesians has been called “the deepest book of the New Testament.” It is exceedingly rich in profound truth, revealing the eternal, infallible redemptive purpose of God, both individually and inclusively in detailed, vivid and glorious terms.

It is also intensely practical, reaching out to the major areas and aspects of the Christian experience. It closes with a detailed account of our Christian warfare. This is Paul’s customary method: to lay a doctrinal foundation, then build the practical upon it. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the historical section in Romans (Chapters 9–11), his letters may each be divided into two parts: the doctrinal and then the practical: eg., Eph. 1:1–3:21, Doctrinal; Eph. 4:1–6:20, Practical.

### Authorship

This Epistle begins with the usual Apostolic acknowledgement and Divine authority [Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ διὰ θελήματος θεοῦ] (1:1). Many radical critics deny the Pauline authorship because of the letter’s alleged cumbersome style, etc., but the subjects contemplated call for both exactness and fulness. There is usually a claim to Apostolic calling and Divine appointment in his salutations: eg., Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1. Internal evidence (1:1; 3:1) reveals the Pauline profundity. External evidence is unanimous among the early Church Fathers.

Note: The impersonal approach and the omission of [ἐν ᾧ ἔφω] is some mss., has caused some to consider this as a circular letter. If so, it might have been one of several copies written with the name left out until sent to a given church [?]. It should be noted that very early after the Apostolic Era, heretics made their own mss. of the NT writings, and edited them to conform to their errors [e.g., Marcion the Gnostic and his canon of the Pauline Epistles, c. 140 AD]. It is true that Paul wrote some encyclical Epistles or letters which could be passed on to other assemblies, e.g., Hebrews.

### Purpose

The city and character of Ephesus and its people have been thoroughly discussed previously as being the center of Artemis worship and the practice of magic. Paul spent more time there than any other place during his ministry.<sup>434</sup> Paul sent Tychicus and Onesimus to Asia Minor with the letters to the Colossians, Ephesians (Eph. 6:21, 24) and Philemon. Philippians was taken by Epaphroditus.

The general and impersonal nature of this Epistle has suggested various purposes: e.g., the existence of strong occult practices at Ephesus, problems between Jewish and Gentile Christians, the influence of early Gnostic tendencies, a need to stress unity in the faith and in the church, etc. While such issues may have influenced the Apostle, five elements seem the most significant:

1. He prays for them and writes to them, having heard of their exemplary love and faith (1:15ff).
2. The existence of strong occultism and demonic opposition called for a contrast of the reality of Divine power to be realized in the Christian experience (Cf. 1:15–2:1; 3:9–19; 6:10–20).
3. Being set aside from his evangelistic labors and missionary journeys, Paul was able to set forth the truth and glory of the Christian doctrine of salvation in all of its fullness and its relationship to and manifestation through Christian experience.

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<sup>434</sup> See pp. 161, 165–171.



4. Paul sets forth what has been termed a “Cosmic Christ,” i.e., The Lordship of Jesus Christ in relation to creation, redemption, and the powers of heaven and earth in this and the succeeding ages, and his reign over the church (1:9–10; 19–23; 6–10; 3:9–10, 17–21; 5:22–32).
5. He develops the doctrine of the church in its ideal or institutional sense in sweeping terms as foundational to any given assembly or gathered church.

### Excursus: The “Prison Epistles” and “Prison Prayers”

The term “Prison Epistles” refers to the letters the Apostle dictated and sent to various churches and individuals during his first Roman imprisonment.<sup>435</sup> In chronological order these are: Colossians (c. 62), Ephesians (c. 62), Philemon (c. 62) and Philippians (c. 63). Internal circumstances indicate the general order. Colossians and Ephesians are twin epistles, dealing with the same realities. Philemon and Philippians anticipate his soon release and return to mission work (Phlm. 22; Phil. 1:24–25; 2:23–24).

These letters manifest a different aspect of the Apostle’s personality and mentality. They were written when he was under house arrest and not actively engaged in evangelism or responding to some crisis or urgent need.

His “Prison Prayers” are awesome as his heart was full, his mind free and his spirit soared to the heights under Divine inspiration. There are no prayers in Scripture, with the exception of our Lord’s own “High Priestly Prayer” of John chapter 17, which are more profound, deeply theological or at the same time, so thoroughly practical and necessary!

These are intercessory prayers; they reveal the heart of the great Apostle, his motives, desires and intense longing for the people of God to whom he wrote. They are at once profound and yet intensely practical. They give to their readers what they needed and what we need in our own day.

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<sup>435</sup> See pp. 46, 203–204.

There are several considerations: first, each of these prayers is an extended, complex sentence—and Phil. 1:9–11 (43 words), Col. 1:9–20 (218 words), Eph. 1:15–23 (169 words) and Eph. 3:14–21 (123 words).<sup>436</sup> Second, the chronological order is as follows: Col. 1:9ff; Eph. 1:15–23; Eph. 3:14–19 and Phil. 1:9–11. Third, each of these prayers is characterized by a series of thoughts, petitions and praise, with one thought rushing in upon another. This reveals Paul’s mind and heart, filled with love, concern, compassion and the inspiration of the Spirit, finding unrestrained and unreserved expression.

Finally, in each prayer Paul’s mind becomes absorbed with the person, work and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ—and the prayer becomes an inspired contemplation of our Lord’s greatness and glory. This is especially true in Col. 1:9ff, where the prayer dissolves into a glorious contemplation of the eternal glory of Christ, and in Eph. 1:15–23, which follows the profound eulogy to the infallible redemptive purpose—and 3:14–19, which carries itself into the great doxology of v. 20–21.

#### Colossians and Ephesians

The Ephesian letter has many parallels with Colossians. Both have Christ and his church as dominant themes. However, where Colossians is more apologetical, Ephesians is more theological. Colossians is controversial, whereas Ephesians is contemplative. Colossians emphasizes the local while Ephesians emphasizes the ideal or institutional.

The doctrine of the church in both Colossians and Ephesians is considered in its abstract, institutional or generic sense.<sup>437</sup> Internal evidence seems to indicate that this epistle may have

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<sup>436</sup> The Ephesian Epistle is characterized by such extended, complex sentences: Eph. 1:3–14, 202 words; 1:15–23, 169 words; 2:1–7, 124 words; 2:14–18, 84 words; 3:1–7, 106 words; 3:14–21, 123 words; 4:11–16, 124 words; and 6:14–20, 113 words.

<sup>437</sup> Those who would equate “the church” with the whole of Christendom confuse the church with the kingdom of God. See the author’s *Catechism on Bible Doctrine*, Q 148, pp. 291–292.

been a more circular letter, fitted for the other churches in this part of Asia Minor. Note the comparison:<sup>438</sup>

| <b>Colossians</b>                                  | <b>Ephesians</b>                                                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Christ and the Cosmos                              | Christ and the Church                                                |
| The NT Church as an institution considered ideally | The NT Church as an institution considered ideally                   |
| Christ the Head of the Church                      | The Church as the Body of Christ comprised of both Jews and Gentiles |
| More Personal and Local                            | Less Personal and Lofty                                              |
| Tone: the intensity and tumult of a battlefield    | Tone: calmness of surveying the field after victory                  |

### Philemon

The letter to Philemon is mostly personal and is two-fold in purpose: first, to explain the conversion and return of Onesimus, a runaway slave who was converted under Paul's ministry in Rome. Second, to prepare for Paul's anticipated arrival. Philemon lived at Colossae in the Lycus Valley, and Paul had desired to evangelize there since his second missionary journey (Acts 16:6–8).<sup>439</sup> Onesimus accompanied Tychicus to Colossae (Col. 4:7–9, 18).

### Philippians

Paul sent this letter to the church at Philippi, the first church established in Europe, planted during his second missionary journey. Philippi was a *Colonia Romana*, and the congregation was greatly loved by Paul. The record of its establishment is given in Acts 16. They had shown an interest in and supported his labors more than any other church (Phil. 1:5; 4:10–19).<sup>440</sup>

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<sup>438</sup> This chart is adapted from *Jensen's Survey of the New Testament*, p. 317.

<sup>439</sup> See p. 119.

<sup>440</sup> See pp. 119–126.

The Philippian letter was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphroditus from Philippi with a gift for the Apostle (1:5; 4:10, 14–18). An answer from Paul was delayed because Epaphroditus contracted a severe illness (2:25–30). When he finally recovered, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter.

The two profound “Prison Prayers” found in this epistle can be analyzed as follows:

A Prayer for Spiritual Illumination (Eph. 1:15–23)<sup>441</sup>

- A. The Occasion of the Prayer (v. 15–16). Their reputed Christian testimony.
- B. The Object of the Prayer (v. 17–19). Spiritual illumination in terms of realized power.
- C. The Outlook of the Prayer (v. 19–23). The resurrection, exaltation and sovereign dominion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Prayer for Divine Plentitude (Eph. 3:14–19)

This is one of the greatest, if not the greatest prayer in Scripture after the High Priestly Prayer of our Lord in John 17. Why? Because of its subject matter: “...that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.”

- I. The Approach to the Prayer (v. 14–15)
  - A. The Occasion of the prayer (v. 14)
  - B. The Posture of the Prayer (v. 14)
  - C. The Address of the Prayer (v. 14)
  - D. The Outlook of the Prayer (v. 15)
- II. The Appeal for Plentitude (v. 16–17)
  - A. The Necessary Preparation for Divine Fullness (v. 16–17)
  - B. The Unknowable Knowledge of the Love of Christ (v. 18)
  - C. The Finite Grasp of the Infinite (v. 19)
- III. The Ascription of Praise (v. 20–21)
  - A. Divine Unlimited Ability (v. 20)
  - B. An Ascription of Highest Praise (v. 21)

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<sup>441</sup> The titles and outlines have been taken from W. Graham Scroggie's “Paul's Prison Prayers,” *The Ministry of Keswick: Second Series*, pp. 13–53.

## Key Passage

The Key-verses: 1:3–14, especially 1:9–10. The Key—phrase: “In Christ” or its equivalent, i.e., “in Him,” “in whom,” “in the Lord,” etc. occurs 32 times. This single sentence sums up the Trinitarian reality of our redemption, from election to our Christian experience and assurance. The centrality and summation is the cosmic reign of Jesus Christ—His universal Lordship.

Note: The eulogy of v. 3–14 form the second longest single sentence in the Gk. NT: 202 words.<sup>442</sup> In one sentence, the Apostle summarizes the eternal redemptive purpose of the triune Godhead as it centers in the Lord Jesus Christ—the most profound single statement in all Scripture.

## Theological and Practical Themes

The first half of this epistle (Chapters 1–3) deals with theological themes and the second (Chapters 4–6), with practical themes.

The doctrinal themes include: The eternal redemptive purpose and universal Lordship of Christ (1:3–23), the nature of salvation by grace through faith (2:1–10), Gentile believers included in the covenant people of God—the church—by faith (2:11–3:21).

The practical themes include: the unity of the church in the exercise of gifts and edification (4:1–16), true, spiritual separation (4:17–21), a necessary regenerate mindset, behavior and ethic (4:22–32), the expression of a spiritually-separated lifestyle (5:1–21), marriage and the Christian ethic (5:22–33), human relationships and the Christian ethic (6:1–9) and the Christian’s spiritual conflict (6:10–20).

## The Christian’s Conflict (6:10–20)

Close attention must be given to the warfare of the believer in 6:10–20.

1. *The Power for the Conflict* (v. 10). [Τὸ λοιπόν] a final word—a Call to Arms! The language is filled with emphatic terms of power

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<sup>442</sup> William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Gk. Text*, p. 4.

and might [ἐνδυναμοῦσθε (pres. imp.)...τῷ κράτει τῆς ἰσχύος αὐτοῦ]! The entire passage is filled with imperatives.

2. *The Preparation for the Conflict* (v. 11). [ἐνδύσασθε (aor. imp.) τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ]. A spiritual battle which demands urgent action and the utmost responsibility, but which must not be fought in our own strength. “Panoply,” a suit of armor. [τὰς μεθοδείας τοῦ διαβόλου]. The Devil is a “methodist,” i.e., note his methodology, his *modus operandi*. The first law of warfare: Know your enemy!
3. *The Principle of the Conflict* (v. 12). “Wrestle” [ἡ πάλη]. Hand-to-hand combat. Our adversaries are not human, but powerful demonic forces.<sup>443</sup> To end at the human level is mere sectarianism and debate. We wage a higher, more critical and strategic warfare!
4. *The Provision for the Conflict* (v. 13–17). Key-terms: “Put on” [ἐνδύσασθε (aor. imp.)] (v. 11), “Take up” [ἀναλάβετε, aor. imp.] (v. 13), “Stand” [Στήτε οὖν, aor. imp.] (v. 14), which governs the actions of v. 14–16. (v. 17) “Take” [δέξασθε, aor. imp.] “Take old of” or “receive with the hand!”—grasp, grab!

Mark the terminology for “the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God [ῥῆμα θεοῦ],” “utterance,” i.e., the spoken word of God. Quoting Scripture in prayer, or praying God’s words back to Him.<sup>444</sup>

5. *The Priority of the Conflict* (v. 18–20). v. 18 [προσευχόμενοι]. This section begins with a ptc., not a verb. Prayer assumes the priority in this spiritual conflict. The sword of the Spirit is primarily wielded in prayer [ἐν πνεύματι]. True, spiritual prayers—for the battle is desperate—and not all prayers are truly “spiritual”—some may be casual; others may only be traditional.

## Outline

A very simple outline is three-fold:

A) The Wealth of the Christian (1:1–3:21)

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<sup>443</sup> Cf. v. 12, ...πρὸς τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου...

<sup>444</sup> Matthew Henry, the great commentator, gave the final years of his life to writing a book on this very subject. Republished recently as: *A Way to Pray*.

- B) The Walk of the Christian (4:1–6:9)
- C) The Warfare of the Christian (6:10–24)

An abbreviated, introverted outline may be kept in mind, as several of Paul's Epistles, including Ephesians, are essentially two-fold in development, with the doctrinal providing the basis and foundation for the experiential.

- A) Introduction (1:1–2)
- B) Doctrinal: Our Position in Christ (1:3–3:19)
- C) Doxology (3:20–21)
- B) Practical: Our Practice as Christians (4:1–6:20)
- A) Conclusion (6:21–24)

### Analysis

- Salutation (1:1–2)
- A. The Author (1:1a)
- B. The Recipients (1:1b)
- C. The Salutation and Invocation (1:2)

#### I. Doctrinal:

Believers Considered Doctrinally, Historically and Ecclesiastically  
The Believer's Wealth in Christ  
(1:3–3:21)

- A. The Purpose of God for Our Redemption (1:3–14)
  - 1. The Purpose: Election and Predestination by the Father: Theological (v. 3–6)
    - a. A Eulogy concerning our eternal Spiritual Blessings (1:3)
    - b. The Elucidation of the Divine Decree (v. 4–5)
    - c. The Sovereignty of Grace through Christ (1:6)
  - 2. The Plan: Redemption and Consummation by the Son: Historical (1:7–12)
    - a. Redemption through His Blood (1:7)
    - b. The Revelation of Redemptive Consummation in and through Christ (1:8–10)
    - c. From Divine Predestination to Conversion (1:11–12)
  - 3. The Process: Salvation and Assurance by the Spirit: Experiential (1:13–14)
    - a. Hearing, Believing and Sealed by the Spirit (1:13)
    - b. The Objective Assurance of Salvation (1:14)
- B. The Prayer of Paul for Spiritual Illumination (1:15–23)
  - 1. The Occasion of this Prayer: The Reputation of

|                                                                        |            |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Faith and Love                                                         | (1:15–16)  |
| a. The Basis of the Prayer                                             | (1:15)     |
| b. The Nature of the Prayer                                            | (1:16)     |
| 2. The Object of this Prayer: The Realization of Power                 | (1:17–19a) |
| a. The Father addressed; the Petition Asked                            | (1:17)     |
| b. The Petition for Spiritual Illumination and Realization of Power    | (1:18–19b) |
| 3. The Outlook of this Prayer: The Universal Headship of Christ        | (1:19b–23) |
| a. The Manifestation of this mighty Power in Christ                    | (1:20)     |
| b. The Universal Dominion of Christ's Lordship                         | (1:21–23)  |
| 1. Present and Future Everlasting Dominion                             | (1:21)     |
| 2. Present Ecclesiastical Dominion                                     | (1:22–23)  |
| C. The People of the Church Considered Historically and Doctrinally    | (2:1–22)   |
| 1. The Power of God manifested: Salvation by Grace                     | (2:1–10)   |
| a. The Historical Transformation                                       | (2:1–7)    |
| 1. The Past: Slaves of sin, Children of wrath                          | (2:1–3)    |
| 2. The Present: A full Salvation                                       | (2:4–6)    |
| 3. The Future: The infinite Goodness of God: a complete salvation      | (2:7)      |
| b. The Doctrinal Explanation                                           | (2:8–10)   |
| 1. Salvation by Grace through Faith                                    | (2:8)      |
| 2. Salvation is the Free Gift of God                                   | (2:9)      |
| 3. Salvation is Necessarily Transforming                               | (2:10)     |
| 2. The Purpose of God manifested: The Unity of Believers               | (2:11–22)  |
| a. The State of Gentiles before Salvation                              | (2:11–12)  |
| b. The State of Gentiles after Salvation                               | (2:13–14)  |
| c. Gentiles and Jews unified in the institutional Church as Christians | (2:15–22)  |
| D. The Purpose and Mystery of the Church Considered Abstractly         | (3:1–13)   |
| 1. The Revelation of the Mystery of the Church                         | (3:1–9)    |
| a. The Revelation to Paul concerning this Mystery                      | (3:1–6)    |
| b. The Commission of Paul to preach this Mystery                       | (3:7–9)    |
| 2. The Fellowship in the Mystery of the Church                         | (3:10–13)  |



- a. Heavenly Powers witness the Revelation of this Mystery (3:10)
- b. The eternal Purpose of Christ revealed in this Mystery (3:11)
- c. The Believer's confidence and boldness center in Christ (3:12)
- d. Paul urges his readers not to misunderstand his sufferings (3:13)
- E. The Prayer of Paul for Spiritual Knowledge and Divine Fullness (3:14–21)
  - 1. Paul's Approach to Prayer (3:14–15)
    - a. The Posture of Paul in prayer and the Person addressed: the Father (3:14)
    - b. The Compass of Paul's prayer is cosmically inclusive (3:15)
  - 2. Paul's Appeal for Divine Plentitude (3:16–19)
    - a. A petition for the Realization of Spiritual Power (3:16)
    - b. The Compass of Paul's Prayer: Divine Plentitude (3:17–19)
  - 3. Paul's Ascription of Praise (3:20–21)
    - a. The Infinite Power available to the Believer in Prayer (3:20)
    - b. The Church is the finality of God's Redemptive Purpose (3:21)

## II. Practical:

Believers Considered Practically and Experientially  
The Believer's Walk in Grace, Obedience and Warfare  
(4:1–6:20)

- A. Believers are to Walk in Unity (4:1–6)
  - 1. The Believers' necessary Spiritual Calling (4:1–3)
    - a. A plea for our doctrine and our experience to coincide (4:1)
    - b. The necessary moral Christian qualities for our walk (4:2)
    - c. The necessary Character of our spiritual walk (4:3)
  - 2. The Believers' necessary Spiritual Unity (4:4–6)
    - a. The great unifying truths (4:4–5)
    - b. These unifying truths given by God who

|                                                                               |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| interpenetrates all                                                           | (4:6)       |
| A. Believers are to Walk in Maturity                                          | (4:7–16)    |
| 1. The Variety of Spiritual Gifts                                             | (4:7–13)    |
| a. These spiritual gifts derive from the ascended Christ                      | (4:7–10)    |
| b. The variety and purpose of these Spiritual Gifts                           | (4:11–13)   |
| 2. The Unity of Spiritual Maturity                                            | (4:14–16)   |
| a. The Negative aspect: results prevented: spiritual immaturity and deception | (4:14)      |
| b. The Positive aspect: results produced: spiritual maturity and unity        | (4:15–16)   |
| B. Believers are to Walk in Holiness                                          | (4:17–5:17) |
| 1. The Spiritual Contrast: The Reality of Regenerating Grace                  | (4:17–24)   |
| a. Contrasting principles of life: the necessity of regenerating grace        | (4:17–19)   |
| b. Contrasting principles of life: assessment of our present state            | (4:20–24)   |
| 2. Our Personal Conduct: Dehabituation and Rehabilitation <sup>445</sup>      | (4:25–32)   |
| a. Contrasted principles of living and acting: Sin vs. Holiness               | (4:25–29)   |
| b. A command to stop grieving the Holy Spirit who has sealed us               | (4:30)      |
| c. Contrasted principles of speaking and attitude                             | (4:31–32)   |
| 3. Our Social Conduct: The High Spiritual Standard                            | (5:1–17)    |
| a. A Command to walk in love as befitting God's children                      | (5:1–2)     |
| b. A Prohibition of sinful and immoral speech and behavior                    | (5:3–5)     |
| c. A Warning against the deceptiveness of sin                                 | (5:6–7)     |
| d. A Plea for Spiritual and Moral Separation                                  | (5:8–14)    |
| e. A Plea to walk a finely-drawn line spiritually                             | (5:15–17)   |
| C. Believers are to Walk in the Spirit                                        | (5:18–21)   |
| 1. Prohibition of Drunkenness                                                 | (5:18a)     |

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<sup>445</sup> By “dehabituation” and “rehabilitation” is meant that former habits characteristic of the “old man” are to be stopped and replaced by new habits characteristic of the “new man” in Christ. Simply leaving off old habits or adding new ones is not sufficient.

- 2. Command to be filled with the Spirit (5:18b)
- 3. Spiritual Speaking and Meditation (5:19)
- 4. Thanksgiving for all Things (5:20)
- 5. Submission to one another in the Fear of God (5:21)
- D. Believers are to Walk Consistently: the Christian Domestic Ethic (5:22–6:9)
  - 1. Wives and Husbands: Submission and Love (5:22–33)
    - a. The submission of the wife under Christ; the headship of the husband (5:22–24)
    - b. The husband commanded to love his wife and care for her (5:25–28)
    - c. Christ and the Church is the great pattern for the marriage relationship (5:29–32)
  - 2. Children and Parents: Honor and Discipline (6:1–4)
    - a. The obedience of children to parents: this is right (6:1)
    - b. Honor to Parents: the first Commandment with promise (6:2–3)
    - c. An admonition to fathers and their discipline (6:4)
  - 3. Servants and Masters: Obedience and Justice (6:5–9)
    - a. Servants: heart-obedience to masters as unto the Lord (6:5–6)
    - b. Servants: the reward of true heart-service (6:7–8)
    - c. Masters: remember you have a master in heaven (6:9)
- The Believer's Spiritual Warfare  
(6:10–20)
- E. Believers are to Walk in a Guarded Manner: the Christian's Conflict (6:10–20)
  - 1. The Power for the Conflict (6:10)
    - a. A Call to be strong (6:10a)
    - b. The Source of our strength: the might and power of God (6:10b)
  - 2. The Preparation for the Conflict (6:11)
    - a. The call to be completely armed (6:11a)
    - b. The great Enemy of the Christian and his methods (6:11b)
  - 3. The Principle of the Conflict (6:12)
    - a. The Enemies are not human and must not end on the human level (6:12a)
    - b. The Enemies are great and powerful spiritual,

|                                                                   |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| demonic forces                                                    | (6:12b)   |
| 4. The Provision for the Conflict                                 | (6:13–17) |
| a. The Panoply of God: the suit of armor which God provides       | (6:13)    |
| b. The great human responsibility to be prepared                  | (6:13–14) |
| c. “Stand” is the great command                                   | (6:13–14) |
| d. The Christian’s armor described                                | (6:13–17) |
| 1. The loins gird about with truth                                | (6:14)    |
| 2. The breastplate of righteousness                               | (6:14)    |
| 3. Boots: the preparation of the gospel of peace                  | (6:15)    |
| 4. The shield of faith                                            | (6:16)    |
| 5. The helmet of salvation                                        | (6:17a)   |
| 6. The sword of the Spirit, the word of God                       | (6:17b)   |
| 5. The Priority of the Conflict                                   | (6:18–20) |
| a. The focus of the battle is upon spiritual prayer               | (6:18)    |
| b. Paul is not ashamed to ask prayer for himself and his ministry | (6:19–20) |
| Conclusion: Final Remarks and Benediction                         | (6:21–24) |
| A. Personal Matters                                               | (6:21–22) |
| B. Final Benediction                                              | (6:23–24) |

### Notes and Observations

- (1:3–14). The most profound single statement in Scripture. Our salvation rests in the Divine, Triune, eternal purpose and it is in the Lord Jesus Christ and through the work of the Spirit. Our assurance has a glorious objective foundation.
- (1:15–23). A single sentence. How are we to pray and what are we to pray for? Do we pray for spiritual enlightenment? Do we know the power of God in and through our prayers?
- (2:1–3). Spiritual death is a state of activity in every other sphere. One may be morally, socially and even religiously “active,” but be and remain spiritually dead.
- (2:4–5). “But God...” This is the glorious intrusion of saving grace into the life. This is saving grace. Regeneration is nothing less than being quickened to spiritual life.
- (2:6–7). Our salvation is complete and immutable, as is our union with Christ. Cf. 1:3–14.
- (2:8–10). This is a doctrinal explanation of the foregoing. Note v. 8. We are saved by grace—the quickening power of God

(v. 5–7), and “through faith,” [διὰ πίστεως] not “because of faith” [διὰ πίστιν]! This is the great difference between salvation by grace and salvation by works. “are ye saved” [ἐστε σεσωσμένοι], a perf. pass. periphrastic: “initially saved and kept saved.”

7. (2:14). Gentiles were utterly excluded from the covenants and hope of Israel. The “middle wall” was literal in the Jerusalem Temple, and no Gentile could trespass upon pain of death.<sup>446</sup> Paul uses this as a figure for the full acceptance of Gentiles believers through the redemptive work of our Lord.
8. (3:1ff). Paul, as the Apostle to the Gentiles, was put in possession of the great mystery that the Gentiles, through faith in the Lord Jesus were, with the Jewish believers, comprised one body. This is the church in an ideal or abstract sense. This was one of the great burdens of Paul’s ministry (Gal. 2:11–21; Acts 15:1ff; 22:17–24).
9. (3:14–21). The greatest of Paul’s “prison prayers.” Do we perceive that there is much to yearn for and to possess in our spiritual pilgrimage and progression?
10. (4:1). Our Christian walk—experience, behavior and ethic—is to correspond to the glorious redemption that is ours in Christ.
11. (4:2–16). True spiritual unity and the exercise of spiritual gifts are meant for the glory of God and the blessing and maturity of the assembly. Love is the crowning virtue (Jn. 13:34–35; Rom. 12:9–10).
12. (4:17–19). Cf. Eph. 5:8; 1 Pet. 4:1–6. Converting grace means a sharp and distinct contrast with the world.
13. (4:22–24). Not a command, but statement framed from the past. Mark the use of the aor. inf. of result,<sup>447</sup> i.e., the old man was our old, unregenerate self; the new man is our

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<sup>446</sup> See pp. 181–182.

<sup>447</sup> Aor. inf. of result: “you have already put off...you have already put on...”

regenerate self. Paul did not teach that believers are both an old man and a new man, or that we have two natures. The old man was crucified with Christ so that the body, as characterized by sin might be stripped of its dominating power (Rom. 6:6). Cf. Col. 3:9–10 and the use of the aor. ptcs.<sup>448</sup> The believer's infirmity is not the "old man" or "old nature," but a principle of indwelling and sin and remaining corruption (Rom. 7:17–23). Thus, "the crucifixion of the old man" is not an experience to be sought, but a reality to be reckoned [Rom. 6:6, note the aor., "was crucified," referring to the initiation of our union with Christ].

14. (4:25–32). This exhortation for a Christian ethic stems from the reality of converting grace.
15. (5:1–2). Almost every exhortation to Christians concerns love—a Christ-like, self-sacrificing love, which mirrors that of our Lord (Jn. 13:34–35).
16. (5:2–14). We are known by our behavior and associations. Who we are determines what we do.
17. (5:15–17). Walk circumspectly. [ἀκριβῶς], source of our word "acrobat." We must walk a fine line. We must walk accurately.
18. (5:18–21). One may drink wine to excess, but one can never quaff too much of the Spirit! Note that singing—godly, scriptural hymns and songs—are closely aligned with the fullness of the Spirit. Next to our Bible is our hymnbook!
19. (5:22–33). A truly Christian marriage necessitates the godly submissiveness of the wife and the godly headship of the husband after the pattern of our Lord. If either is lacking, there will be strife and discord. Cf. 1 Pet. 3:1–7.
20. (6:1–9). A principle of submission and responsibility between parents and children and slaves and masters.
21. (6:10–20). Paul teaches no type of perfectionist doctrine. The Christian experience is one of spiritual warfare, even for the most spiritual.

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<sup>448</sup> Aor. ptcs., "you have put off...you have put on..."

22. (6:10–12). See previous comments on the Christian's Conflict. Our enemy is never another human being. We fight a fierce spiritual warfare with spiritual powers, and our strength is in the Lord and His might.
23. (6:11–17). Although the pieces of armor are described, the armor is considered as a suit of armor [τὴν πανοπλίαν τοῦ θεοῦ, “panoply”]. There is no thought of being only partially armed. See previous comments under the Christian's Conflict.
24. (6:18–20). This spiritual battle is largely fought in prayer! This is reason enough never to slight our spiritual duty of praying and intercession. Even Paul besought the prayers of God's people for preaching grace and power.





## Philippians

### Introduction

Paul sent this letter to the church at Philippi, the first church established in Europe, planted during his second missionary journey. Philippi was a *Colonia Romana*, and the congregation was greatly loved by Paul. The record of its establishment is given in Acts 16. They had shown an interest in and had shared in his labors more than any other church (Phil. 1:5; 4:10–19).<sup>449</sup> For the history and significance of Philippi and its strategic position, see pp. 122–123 in this work.

### Authorship

Historically, there has been little doubt concerning the genuineness and authenticity of this letter as being from the Apostle Paul.

Note: Genuineness deals with the given authorship. Was it written by the stated author? Authenticity deals with facts and content. Are the stated facts true?<sup>450</sup>

Internal evidence (1:1) reveals much of Paul's personality, character and personal concerns as he opens himself to this beloved congregation. This is the most personal, intimate and revealing of Paul's letters. External evidence is abundant: Clement of Rome (35–99), Ignatius (35–108), Polycarp (69–155), Irenaeus (130–202), Clement of Alexandria (150–215), Tertullian (160–220), the Marcionite Canon (140–160), and the Old Syriac and Old Latin versions (150–175).

Note: Some radical critics [e.g., F. C. Baur of the Tübingen School] questioned the genuineness because of alleged traces of imitation, anachronisms, Gnostic ideas and doctrinal differences from Paul's other epistles. Others have questioned its unity, positing a combination of two letters. Such only reveals the prejudice of radical criticism.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> For the record of Paul's Macedonian vision and initial ministry at Philippi, see pp. 121–126.

<sup>450</sup> See H. S. Miller, *General Biblical Introduction*, pp. 177–178.

<sup>451</sup> See H. C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 248–249.

## Provenance, Date and Occasion

Internal evidence bears witness to Paul's incarceration at Rome and his circumstances there (1:7, 12–19, 25–26, 30; 2:23–24; 4:23). This would fix the date at 63 AD, anticipating his soon release—the last of the four “Prison Epistles.”<sup>452</sup>

The Philippian letter was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphroditus from Philippi with a gift for the Apostle (1:5; 4:10, 14–18). An answer from Paul was delayed because Epaphroditus contracted a severe illness (2:25–30). When he finally recovered, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter.

## Purposes

The purposes were: first, to thank them for their gift and concern (1:4–5; 4:10–19); second, to inform them of his state in prison and anticipated release (1:12–25); third, to encourage and exhort them to unity (1:26–2:16; 4:1–9); fourth, to warn them of Judaistic and antinomian teachers (3:1–21); fifth, to inform them of the anticipated visit by Timothy (2:18–24); sixth, a kind exhortation to stability (4:4–9); and finally, a kind expression of greetings to all (4:4:21–23).

## Key-Terms and Theme

The key-verse is 1:21, an encapsulation of Paul's Christ-centered, Christ-dominated life and strong desire to depart and be with Him (1:120–23). The key-word is “joy.” The terms “joy” and “rejoice” and “rejoicing” occur seventeen times in this short letter. Following the theme of joy in summary fashion:

|                   |             |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Joy in Living     | (Chapter 1) |
| Joy in Service    | (Chapter 2) |
| Joy in Fellowship | (Chapter 3) |
| Joy in Rewards    | (Chapter 4) |

Again, with “Rejoicing” as the theme:

|                                     |                 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| We are to Rejoice in Affliction     | (1:12–18)       |
| We are to Rejoice in Accomplishment | (2:1–18)        |
| We are to Rejoice in Anticipation   | (3:8–14, 20–21) |
| We are to Rejoice in Anxiety        | (4:6–7)         |

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<sup>452</sup> See pp. 203–204, 299–300.

The theme is Christ. He is mentioned thirty-seven times in this short letter. This is truly a Christological Epistle! In Chapter 1: Bondslaves of Christ, saints in Christ (v.1), grace and peace from Christ (v. 2), preserved in Christ (v. 6), affection in Christ (v. 8), faithful in Christ (v. 10), fruits of righteousness by Christ (v. 11), identification with Christ (v. 13), preaching Christ (v. 15), supply of the Spirit through Christ (v. 19), Christ magnified by life or death (v. 20), life equals Christ (v. 21), anticipation of being with Christ (v. 23), rejoicing in Christ (v. 26), lifestyle to reflect Christ (v. 27), grace given through Christ (v. 29).

In Chapter 2: consolation in Christ (v. 1), having the mind of Christ (v. 5), the pattern is the humiliation and exaltation of Christ (v. 6–11), rejoicing in the day of Christ (v. 16), seeking the things of Christ (v. 20–21), sacrificial work for Christ (v. 30).

In Chapter 3: rejoicing in Christ (v. 3), counting all loss for Christ (v. 7–8), faith in Christ (v. 9), apprehended by Christ (v. 12), the goal is Christ (v. 14), enemies of the cross of Christ (v. 18), looking in anticipation for Christ (v. 20).

In Chapter 4: the mind garrisoned in Christ (v. 6–7), enablement through Christ (v. 13), supply of all things in Christ (v. 19), greeting the saints in Christ (v. 21), reception of the grace of Christ (v. 23). Thus we have, in summary:

|                     |                       |                  |
|---------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Christ our Life     | and Suffering Grace   | (1:21, 29–30)    |
| Christ our Mind     | and Solidifying Grace | (2:5, 12)        |
| Christ our Goal     | and Sanctifying Grace | (3:10–21)        |
| Christ our Strength | and Sufficient Grace  | (4:11–13, 18–19) |

### The “Prison Prayers”: for the Philippians

Three of these “Prison Epistles” contain remarkable prayers for their recipients. Each is an extended sentence and exhibits a fullness and completeness which are extraordinary.<sup>453</sup> The prayer for the Philippians is:

A Prayer for Discerning Love (Phil. 1:9–11)

This prayer lends itself easily to a variety of analyses. Note the following:

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<sup>453</sup> See pp. 299–300.

The Process of Love's Perfecting (v. 9)  
 The Purpose of Love's Perfecting (v. 10)  
 The Power of Love's Perfecting (v. 11)

Consider this:

Love in Possession—the Predominance of this Love (v. 9)  
 Love in Expression—the Potential of this Love (v. 10)  
 Love in Progression—the Permanence of this Love (v. 11)

Consider a two-fold division with its subdivisions:

- I. Love—Its immediate Requirements (v. 9–10a)
  - A. The Enlargement of Love (v. 9a)
  - B. The Enrichment of Love (v. 9b)
  - C. The Employment of Love (v. 10a)
- II. Love—Its Ultimate Results (v. 10b–11)
  - A. A Clearness of Conscience (v. 10b)
  - B. A Consistency of Conduct (v. 10b)
  - C. A Completeness of Character (v. 11)

### Two Outstanding Passages

The first is 2:5–11, one of the great, inclusive Christological passages of the New Testament, dealing inclusively in an abbreviated, succinct manner with the eternal state, humiliation [incarnation, suffering and death] and exaltation of our Lord.

The second is 3:1–21, the personal testimony of the Apostle in terms of religious and spiritual contrasts, present advancement and anticipation in the context of present adversity. Paul is concerned about three issues: Christian unity (1:27; 2:1–4, 12–16; 4:1–3), the Judaizers (3:2ff) and the antinomians (1:27–29; 3:16–19; 4:5).

### Outline

With both the themes of rejoicing and a Christological theme:

- Rejoicing in Serving Christ (1:1–19)
- Rejoicing in Glorifying Christ (1:20–30)
- Rejoicing in the Selflessness of Christ (2:1–11)
- Rejoicing in the Purpose of Christ (2:12–16)
- Rejoicing in the Selflessness of Christians (2:17–30)
- Rejoicing in the Cross of Christ (3:1–9)

|                                      |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| Rejoicing in the Calling of Christ   | (3:10–16)               |
| Rejoicing in the Coming of Christ    | (3:17–4:3)              |
| Rejoicing in the Provision of Christ | (4:4–19) <sup>454</sup> |

### Analysis

|                                                             |             |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| The Salutation                                              | (1:1–2)     |
| I. Paul's Relation to the Philippians                       | (1:3–11)    |
| A. His Thanksgiving for Them                                | (1:3–5)     |
| B. His Confidence in Them                                   | (1:6–7)     |
| C. His Longing for Them                                     | (1:8)       |
| D. His Prayer for Them                                      | (1:9–11)    |
| II. Paul's Present Circumstances                            | (1:12–26)   |
| A. Present Rejoicing: A Mutual Ministry                     | (1:12–20)   |
| B. Future Contemplation: A Blessed Expectation              | (1:21–26)   |
| III. Paul's First Practical Exhortations to the Philippians | (1:27–2:18) |
| A. Rejoicing in the Behavior of the Philippians             | (1:27–30)   |
| B. Rejoicing in the Selflessness of Christ                  | (2:1–11)    |
| C. Rejoicing in the Grace of a Good Testimony               | (2:12–18)   |
| IV. Paul's Plans for his Co-workers                         | (2:19–30)   |
| A. His Plans for Timothy                                    | (2:19–24)   |
| B. His Plans for Epaphroditus                               | (2:25–30)   |
| V. Paul's Warnings against Errors                           | (3:1–4:1)   |
| A. A Warning against Legalism                               | (3:1–16)    |
| B. A Warning against Antinomianism                          | (3:17–4:1)  |
| VI. Paul's Second Practical Exhortations to the Philippians | (4:2–9)     |
| A. An Exhortation to Steadfastness                          | (4:1–3)     |
| B. An Exhortation to Peace                                  | (4:4–9)     |
| VII. Paul's Rejoicing for the Philippians                   | (4:10–20)   |
| A. Rejoicing for their Gift                                 | (4:10)      |
| B. Rejoicing in His Condition                               | (4:11–13)   |
| C. Rejoicing for Their Past and Present Concern             | (4:14–18)   |
| D. Rejoicing in The Faithfulness of God                     | (4:19–20)   |
| The Conclusion                                              | (4:21–23)   |

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:3–5). The love and tenderness of Paul are immediately manifest. V. 5 “Fellowship” [τῇ κοινωνίᾳ] includes financial

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<sup>454</sup> Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, p. 261.

support. "...until [the] now," a subtle reference to the gift they sent.<sup>455</sup>

2. (1:6). The sustaining grace of God is the fountainhead of blessing for the believer.
3. (1:7). A probable reference to his standing and speaking before Praetorian Court of Caesar.
4. (1:9–11). One of the Apostle's "Prison Prayers."<sup>456</sup> A prayer for discerning love. This prayer lends itself easily to a variety of analyses. Note the following:

|                                  |         |
|----------------------------------|---------|
| The Process of Love's Perfecting | (v. 9)  |
| The Purpose of Love's Perfecting | (v. 10) |
| The Power of Love's Perfecting   | (v. 11) |

Consider this:

|                                                  |         |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|
| Love in Possession—the Predominance of this Love | (v. 9)  |
| Love in Expression—the Potential of this Love    | (v. 10) |
| Love in Progression—the Permanence of this Love  | (v. 11) |

Consider a two-fold division with its subdivisions:

- I. Love—Its immediate Requirements (v. 9–10a)
    - A. The Enlargement of Love (v. 9a)
    - B. The Enrichment of Love (v. 9b)
    - C. The Employment of Love (v. 10a)
  - II. Love—Its Ultimate Results (v. 10b–11)
    - A. A Clearness of Conscience (v. 10b)
    - B. A Consistency of Conduct (v. 10b)
    - C. A Completeness of Character (v. 11)
5. (1:12–13). Contrary to the fears of the Philippian Church, Paul was enabled to do a "pioneer" mission work at Rome! The scouts or engineers who preceded the Roman armies were termed "pioneers," the term Paul uses, "furtherance."<sup>457</sup> The word "palace" refers to the *Praetorium* [τῷ πραιτωρίῳ], i.e., the judgment hall of Caesar and the Imperial Court, comprised of Caesar, the heads of the Praetorian Guard and

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<sup>455</sup> ἄχρι τοῦ νῦν.

<sup>456</sup> See pp. 203–204, 299–300.

<sup>457</sup> εἰς προκοπήν, to move forward, advance.

- 22 Roman Senators (Cf. Jn. 18:28, 33; 19:9; Acts 23:35). Before this court Paul both declared and defended his gospel (1:7).
6. (1:15–19). The motive, not the message was questionable. Thus, Paul rejoiced. He could not have rejoiced in a distorted gospel.
  7. (1:19). The deliverance was physical and from imprisonment, i.e., acquittal. The const. emph. that their prayers would actually supply him with the necessary ministry of the Holy Spirit.<sup>458</sup>
  8. (1:20–21). The essential issue with Paul was faithfulness to the truth, neither life nor death. V. 21. No finite vbs. “To live=Christ, to die=gain.”<sup>459</sup>
  9. (1:22–23). Paul was torn between remaining and “pulling up stakes”<sup>460</sup> to be with Christ which is ‘much more better!’
  10. (1:27). There are several terms for “conversation,” i.e., lifestyle. This refers to the behavior of a citizen [πολιτεύεσθαι, imp. Source of Eng. “politics”]. We are to behave as citizens of God’s kingdom.
 

|                                    |            |
|------------------------------------|------------|
| Christian Citizenship—A Look Above | (v. 27a)   |
| Christian Character—A Look Within  | (v. 27b)   |
| Christian Courage—A Look Without   | (v. 28–29) |
| Christian Conflict—A Look Around   | (v. 30)    |
  11. (1:28–30). We are called upon to suffer, and herein may lie our greatest witness and testimony. Steadfastness is a necessity:
 

|                                                       |           |
|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| An Appeal for Steadfastness in the Face of Opposition | (1:27–30) |
| An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation     | (2:1–4)   |
| An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation            | (2:5–11)  |
| An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life      | (2:12–18) |

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<sup>458</sup> διὰ τῆς ὑμῶν δεήσεως καὶ ἐπιχορηγίας τοῦ πνεύματος. Granville Sharps const. of the arth. and anarth. of the same case joined by καί, the second refers to the first.

<sup>459</sup> See. p. 212.

<sup>460</sup> See pp. 56, 212–213.

12. (2:1–4). Unity in the local assembly is both spiritual and humble, and also compassionate and giving.

|                                            |          |
|--------------------------------------------|----------|
| The Spiritual Basis for Spiritual Unity    | (2:1)    |
| The Personal Admonition to Spiritual Unity | (2:2)    |
| The Negative Expression of Spiritual Unity | (2:3a)   |
| The Positive Expression of Spiritual Unity | (2:3b–4) |

#### A Summary of v. 1–18

- An Appeal for Spiritual Unity in the Congregation (2:1–4)  
 An Appeal for Humility in the Congregation (2:5–11)  
 An Appeal to Realize Christ–Likeness in the Life (2:12–18)

13. (2:5). The word “form” [μορφή] denotes what is true of both the outward inward nature, in contrast to “likeness” [σχήματι] and “fashion” [ὁμοιώματι] in v. 7 and 8, which only denote the outward semblance. Our Lord was and is truly Deity, and his service was from the heart and soul.
14. (2:7). Made himself of no reputation,” lit: “emptied himself” [ἐκένωσεν], the source of the *Kenosis theory* of the radical biblical critics who hold that our Lord ceased to be fully Deity in his incarnation. “He extinguished his Divine nature, as it were, by immersing it in the stream of human nature.” He emptied himself of his glory and the independent use of his Divine attributes in his state of humiliation, but remained essentially and fully God in the flesh.
15. (2:8). Our Lord submitted himself to and was obedient unto such a death as a cross—the fullness of his sacrificial and atoning suffering and death.
16. (2:9–11). The state of exaltation of our Lord as the God–Man. Mark the emph. pos. emphasizing his universal, sovereign Lordship.<sup>461</sup>
- |                                                             |        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| a) The Exhortation to Humility in Having the Mind of Christ | (2:5a) |
| b) The Disposition of Christ as Our Great Example           | (2:5b) |

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<sup>461</sup> καὶ πᾶσα γλῶσσα ἑξομολογήσεται ὅτι κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ πατρὸς.



- c) The Exemplification of Humility in the Self–Renunciation of Christ (2:6–8)
- d) The Exaltation of Christ as the Result of His Self–Renunciation (2:9–11)
- 17. (2:12–13). An awesome, glorious blending of Divine sovereignty and human responsibility. We must give our utmost; He gives his sustaining grace.
- 18. (2:15–16). Lit: “holding up” [λόγον ζωῆς ἐπέχοντες], as holding up a light, candle or torch in a darkened place. We are to reveal the truth and expose error by the grace of God.
- 19. (2:19–24). Timothy was Paul’s spiritual son and constant companion. He shared the Apostle’s concern—not by nature but by grace.

#### Concerning Timothy (v. 19–24)

- The Acknowledgment of the Supreme Will of God (v. 19a)
- The Mutual Concern of the Apostle (v. 19b)
- The Anticipated Mission of Timothy (v. 19c)
- The Sad Admission of the Apostle (v. 20–21)
- The Faithfulness and Suitableness of Timothy (v. 22)
- The Proper Time to Send Timothy (v. 23)
- The Anticipation of the Apostle in the Will of God (v. 24)
- 20. (2:25–30). Epaphroditus was a leader [pastor, elder] in the Philippian assembly. He had been sent to Rome with supplies for Paul, but remained a considerable time due to a severe illness. Why did not Paul heal him? Miracles were not performed at the behest of the apostle but by the will and in the set occasion by God. Healing was not a matter of prerogative, but of Divine initiative and power.

#### Concerning Epaphroditus

- The Immediate Sending of Epaphroditus (v. 25a)
- The Character of Epaphroditus Emphasized (v. 25b)
- The Circumstances of the Mission and Ministry of Epaphroditus (v. 26–28)
- The Honorable Reception to be Given to Epaphroditus (v. 29)
- 21. (3:1–3). Warning against the Judaizers. Paul refers to physical circumcision as merely a wound in the flesh [τὴν

κατατομήν]. True circumcision is spiritual and life-altering (Rom. 2:28–29; Col. 2:10–11).

22. (3:4–9). The contrast between Paul as a bigoted, proud, self-righteous Pharisee and a humble believer. Note that one word has not been translated: “having become” [γενόμενος, aor. ptc.], i.e., “*having become* blameless.” Paul actually thought that he had achieved sinlessness before the law of God in his blinded, self-righteous state!

What Paul could Claim in Superiority (v. 4)

What Paul had by Inheritance (v. 5a)

What Paul had by Self-achievement (v. 5b–6)

What Paul had in Christ by Grace Alone (v. 7–11)

23. (3:10–14). The Christian life and experience must be one of progression (2 Pet. 3:18). Not even Paul could dare say, “I have arrived.” He desired to fully grasp why God arrested him on the Damascus Road.
24. (3:15–17). There are several terms in Gk. for “walk.” V. 16, “walk” [στοιχεῖν] means to walk in step, to march, as a column of soldiers, presenting a united front.
25. (3:18–19). False brethren, antinomians, whose appetites are completely fleshly and whose thoughts grovel on the earth in contrast to being spiritually, heavenly-minded.
26. (3:20–21). Living in anticipation of coming glory and glorification. The term “vile” is literally “humiliation.” The body is destined for glory, not something which is inherently sinful [Gnosticism] and simply to be discarded.
27. (4:1–3). An appeal for unity among the leading sisters of the assembly.
28. (4:4). Once again Paul reiterates his theme of rejoicing:  
 Chapter One—*Joy in Living* despite prison and party spirit.  
 Chapter Two—*Joy in Serving* despite very few likeminded.  
 Chapter Three—*Joy in Fellowshiping* despite those in great error.  
 Chapter Four—*Joy in Persevering* despite personal and spiritual issues.
29. (4:6–7). A loving admonition against anxiety and for faithful prayer. It is possible to possess an inexplicable peace from God. “Keep” [φρουρέω] means to “garrison about.”

30. (4:8). This is *not* an admonition to simply “think happy thoughts!”

- ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ. “Whatsoever is true.” This command is capable of several interpretations and applications—and all are legitimate: (1) True as opposed to untrue, true or real as opposed to fantasy. What we want is often in the realm of fantasy, and we seek to irrationally implement these things in the real world to our frustration and disappointment—and embitterment and harm. Fantasy tends to break down the barriers of reality (Cf. Jas. 1:13–16). Truth as opposed to falsehood. (2) Right doctrine and things pertaining to the truth are necessarily included. Cf. Eph. 6:14, “Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth...” Truth is the most essential part of the Christian’s armor. We are of the truth, and live in a world characterized by “the lie.”<sup>462</sup> (3) Truthfulness, i.e., those things that are morally upright and consistent.
- ὅσα σεμνα. “Whatsoever things are honest, honorable, reverent.” Such thoughts will never lead us to sin or dishonor. These will form a barrier against evil thoughts.
- ὅσα δίκαια. “Whatsoever things are righteous.” Are we at all concerned about righteousness? We ought to be. Imputed and imparted righteousness comprehensive of our salvation and experience as believers. Do we think righteous thoughts? Or are they unrighteous, selfish, sinful, spiteful, immoral?
- ὅσα ἅγνα. “Whatsoever things are pure, holy.” Do we have holy thoughts? Or are our thoughts unholy, unpurified, unsanctified—filled with immorality and the impurities and filth of our age?
- ὅσα προσφιλή. “Whatsoever things are pleasing, lovely,” i.e., which call forth love. Do we harbor animosity, are we self-centered and conniving? Are our thoughts unlovely, twisted, perverted, immoral, sinful?
- ὅσα εὐφημα. “Whatsoever things are of good report,” i.e., worthy of praise. Are our thoughts worthy of praise if they

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<sup>462</sup> Cf. Rom. 1:25, “Such ones as who [οἵτινες] changed the truth of God into the lie [τῷ ψεύδει], and worshipped and served the creature more than [side-stepping, παρὰ] the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

should be made known? God knows. Do we have the smile of his countenance?

How is our thought–life? God knows all about it. Nothing is hidden from him. From righteous thoughts come righteous actions. From holy thoughts come holy actions, from loving thoughts come loving actions. How can we experience the peace of God in our hearts if our minds are filled with self and sin?!

31. (4:10–19). Paul expresses his heart–felt thanks for their care for him.

He Rejoices for Their Care and Gift (v. 10)

He Explains his Independence from  
Circumstances (v. 11–14)

He Thanks them for their Gift (v. 15–18)

He Reveals the Abundance of God  
to Them (v. 19)

32. (4:10–13). Some things must be learned, they do not come merely by Divine revelation or by grace, although they are *learned* by grace. We always want grace, as though all grace is most free from trial, experience and effort, but do we want to *learn* by grace—by grace that sustains us *in* and *through* trial?

33. (4:13). This Divine enablement is focused on enduring hardship; the context does not support an omnibus promise.

34. (4:19). We cannot out–give God. What a powerful, significant expression! Paul’s God. The God of Paul, who learned to rise above all adversity and live independently of his circumstances, Paul the sufferer, Paul the intense Christian and tireless servant. Could we say that “*My* God shall supply all your need...?” when we complain, falter in faith, or hide our Christianity?

35. (4:22). There were believers in Caesar’s household. The gospel may go into very unexpected places! No human barrier can successfully stop the gospel.

## Colossians

### Introduction

Colossae was one of three sister cities [Laodicea, Hierapolis and Colossae] in the Lycus Valley of Asia Minor, approximately 100 miles east of Ephesus. These cities received the gospel about the same time, evidently through the influence of travelers who had been evangelized by Paul's ministry at Ephesus or through Paul's companions.<sup>463</sup> Paul himself had never personally preached in the Lycus Valley (Col. 2:1),<sup>464</sup> but was lead by the Spirit to Troas during his second missionary journey, by-passing the area to the west (Acts 16:6–8), and on his third missionary journey, he remained at Ephesus for about three years, and the gospel went throughout all Asia Minor, which would include the Lycus Valley (Acts 19:10).

The Colossian letter was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphras at Rome (1:7) who reported a heresy that had taken root in Colossae. The letter was taken to Colossae by Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus, and they also took the letter to Philemon (Col. 4:7, 9, 18; Phlm. v. 10ff). Paul intended to and probably did preach in the Lycus Valley during the short intermission between his two Roman imprisonments.<sup>465</sup>

### Authorship

The Colossian Epistle is clearly Pauline. Internal evidence is unquestionable (1:1, 23; 4:18). External evidence includes some possible references among the Apostolic Fathers (c. 95–180), Justin Martyr (140), the Muratorian fragment (170), Iraeneus (175), Clement of Alexandria (200), Tertullian (200), Origen

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<sup>463</sup> The letter addressed to Philemon included Timothy in the greeting (v. 1).

<sup>464</sup> It has been posited that Timothy or Epaphras may have evangelized in this area during Paul's lengthy ministry at Ephesus. Merrill Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, p. 321.

<sup>465</sup> See pp. 46, 207, 385–386 for further references to the Lycus Valley. Philemon lived in Colossae and Paul both intended and anticipated to visit him once he was released from his first Roman imprisonment (Phlm. 22).

(315) and Marcion (140). Further, Paul's associates are mentioned both in Colossians and in the letter to Philemon: Timothy, Aristarchus, Mark, Onesimus, Epaphras, Luke and Demas (Col. 1:1, 10, 23–24). Archippus is addressed in both letters (Col. 4:17; Phlm. v. 2).

The Pauline authorship was not questioned until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by radical biblical critics, who assumed alleged difficulties in language, style and theology, including mistakenly attributing a form of Gnosticism<sup>466</sup> to the author. These hold the letter to be “deutero–Pauline.”

### Colossians and the New Testament

The distinct parallel between the Epistles of Colossians and Ephesians is well–documented and discernable on internal grounds. These were written about the same time (c. 61) and comprise two of the four “Prison Epistles” of The Apostle’s first Roman imprisonment.<sup>467</sup> Colossians is correctional whereas Ephesians is more doctrinal.<sup>468</sup> Colossians explores the glorious superiority, preeminence and magnificence of Christ while Ephesians emphasizes His Lordship in the greatness of the eternal redemptive purpose. Colossians portrays Christ as head over all creation; Ephesians emphasizes Christ as also head over his church. There is also a relation to the short, personal letter to Philemon, as he lived at Colossae.

Note: The letter to the Laodiceans (Col. 4:16). The hypotheses are two: first, it may have been a letter which has been lost. Second, it may have been the Ephesian Epistle, if it were a circular letter. There is a spurious “Epistle to the Laodiceans,” written only in Latin, which was for centuries was used to answer the issue.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>466</sup> A mistaken use of the term τὸ πλήρωμα, “the fullness” (2:9), which later became a key Gnostic term.

<sup>467</sup> See pp. 46, 203–204.

<sup>468</sup> Colossians relates to Ephesians as Galatians does to Romans; first correction, then a positive declaration of doctrine.

<sup>469</sup> See D. Edmond Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, pp. 230–232.

## The City of and Church at Colossae

Colossae was located in Phrygia, an eastern area of Asia Minor, to the north of Laodicea and Hierapolis on the Lycus River where the valley narrowed to a gorge some two miles wide and twelve miles long. To the west, the Lycus River joined to the Maeander River.<sup>470</sup> Mount Cadmus (c. 8,000 ft. elev.) to the south towered over the city and Mount Messogis to the north. The area was prone to earthquakes and a major quake shook the city during Paul's time (c. 60). Colossae reached its height of importance during the Persian era. Xerxes marched his army through Colossae in 481 BC. In Roman times the city had declined in significance, though it was still known for its sheep grazing and famous black wool.

The establishment of the church at Colossae is unknown. There were Phrygians at Pentecost (Acts 2:10). Travelers in Asia Minor frequented Ephesus, the capital city of that province. Possibly these brought the gospel to Colossae, or some of Paul's close associates evangelized that area (Acts 19:10; Phlm. v. 1).

The church at Colossae was predominately Gentile, with a Jewish minority. Antiochus III (241–187 BC) had resettled many Jews in the area of Colossae during the Seleucid dynasty (c. 312–63 BC). From the biblical account, it seems that Epaphras was either the pastor or a prominent elder (Col. 1:17; 4:12; Plm. v. 23), and that Archippus had replaced him when the former was in Rome (Col. 4:17; Phlm. v. 2). Philemon was also a prominent member (Phlm. 1ff).

## The “Prison Prayers”: for the Colossians

Three of the “Prison Epistles” contain what has been termed the “Prison Prayers”: one in Colossians (1:9–12), two in Ephesians (1:15–23; 3:14–21) and one in Philippians (1:9–11).<sup>471</sup> The prayer for those of Colossae:

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<sup>470</sup> “Maeander,” Μαίανδρος, source of Eng. “meander,” from the wandering route of this river, whose tributary flowed down the Lycus valley and reached the sea at Miletus on the Eastern Mediterranean.

<sup>471</sup> See pp. 299–300.

### A Prayer for Enlightened Behavior (Col. 1:9–12)<sup>472</sup>

This prayer may be generally outlined as follows:

- I. The Fundamental Equipment for the Christian Life (v. 9)
  - A. The Pursuit of the Blessing
  - B. The Nature of the Blessing
  - C. The Acquirement of the Blessing
- II. The Progressive Experience of the Christian Life (v. 10a)
  - A. The practical energy of the walk
  - B. The ideal aim of the walk
  - C. The significance of this walk
  - D. The exclusiveness of this walk
  - E. The Comprehensiveness of this walk
- III. The Manifold Expression of the Christian Life (v. 10b–12)
  - A. The outward Expression: man-ward in service
  - B. The inward experience: self-ward in character
  - C. The upward expression: God-ward in attitude

### Theology: The Cosmic Christ

Col. 1:13–20; 2:9. This entire epistle is filled with Christ. The theme of the doctrinal section is the Supremacy and preeminence of the Glorified Christ as Head of all creation. All things were created by and for him. He is preeminent over the universe and everything coheres in him<sup>473</sup>—a revelation and declaration of our Lord's universal and sovereign lordship. This is the grandest of the great Christological passages in the Pauline corpus (eg., Eph. 1:3–14; 3:4–21; Phil. 2:5–11).

### The Colossian Heresy

The Colossian heresy was a strange mixture of ritualistic Judaism (2:2–3, 10–18), Oriental mysticism (2:8, 18, 23), pagan asceticism (2:8, 16–23) and elements of Greek philosophy (2:8, 18–23). Some would find here an incipient Gnosticism. In answer, Paul proclaimed the completeness and supremacy of the Person and work of Christ (1:9–2:3, 8–10, 17; 3:1–4).

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<sup>472</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>473</sup> 1:17, ...τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν. All things stand together [cohere] in him.



Note: Gnosticism was a syncretic blend of Judaistic and Christian teaching mixed with Oriental mysticism, asceticism and Greek philosophy. This system of teaching began to enter the churches and became predominant before the end of the first century AD. There were sixteen schools of Gnostic teaching. The Gospel of John and the Epistles of 2 Peter and Jude deal with the threat and influence of Cerinthian and Valentinian Gnosticism and the Johannine Epistles deal with the influence of Docetic Gnosticism. The former denied our Lord's Deity and the latter his true humanity and incarnation. Gnosticism was the major internal threat to Christianity for the first three centuries.<sup>474</sup>

## Outline

As with most of the Apostle Paul's letters, Colossians may be fitted into a two-fold outline, doctrinal and practical:

The Preeminence of Christ in Christian Doctrine (Chaps. 1–2)

The Preeminence of Christ in Christian Conduct (Chaps. 3–4)

A more developed, three-fold outline:

- Introduction (1:1–14)
- I. The Truth about the Christ (1:15–29)
- II. The Truth about the Cults (2:1–23)
- III. The Truth about the Christian (3:1–4:6)
- Conclusion (4:7–18)

## Analysis

- Introduction (1:1–8)
  - A. Salutation (1:1–2)
  - B. Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
    - Note: Faith, Hope and Love
- I. Doctrinal: The Preeminence of Christ (1:9–27)
  - A. The Prayer of the Apostle (1:9–14)
    - 1. The reality of the prayer (1:9)
    - 2. The contents of the prayer (1:9–12)
    - 3. The source of thanksgiving (1:12–14)
  - B. The Person of Christ (1:15–20)
    - 1. His preeminence (1:15)
    - 2. His power (1:16–17)
    - 3. His position (1:18–20)
  - C. The Work of Christ (1:21–27)

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<sup>474</sup> See Vol. II of this *Bible Survey*, pp. 433–436; Vol. III, pp. 118–125.

|                                                         |            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. Reconciliation                                       | (1:21)     |
| 2. Redemption                                           | (1:22–23)  |
| 3. Rejoicing                                            | (1:24)     |
| 4. Revelation                                           | (1:25–27)  |
| II. Ministerial: The Apostleship of Paul                | (1:28–2:7) |
| A. The Mystery and the Ministry                         | (1:28–29)  |
| 1. The method                                           | (1:28)     |
| 2. The manner                                           | (1:29)     |
| B. Christ the Center of the Gospel                      | (2:1–7)    |
| 1. The passion of the striving                          | (2:1)      |
| 2. The persons for whom he strives                      | (2:1–2)    |
| 3. The purpose for such striving                        | (2:3–7)    |
| III. Polemical: The False Philosophy and the True Faith | (2:8–3:4)  |
| A. False Philosophy vs. Christ                          | (2:8–15)   |
| 1. The warning                                          | (2:8)      |
| 2. The sufficiency of Christ                            | (2:9–15)   |
| B. False Worship vs. Christ: Judaic and pagan errors    | (2:16–19)  |
| C. False Asceticism vs. Christ                          | (2:20–3:4) |
| 1. Futility of mere religion                            | (2:20–23)  |
| 2. Exhortation to true religion                         | (3:1–4)    |
| IV. Practical: The Christian Life                       | (3:5–4:6)  |
| A. Considered Negatively                                | (3:5–11)   |
| 1. Mortification: general                               | (3:5–7)    |
| 2. Mortification: specific                              | (3:8–11)   |
| B. Considered Positively                                | (3:12–17)  |
| 1. A regenerate behavior                                | (3:12–13)  |
| 2. Love binds all together                              | (3:14)     |
| 3. Truly spiritual behavior                             | (3:15–17)  |
| C. Considered in Family Relationships                   | (3:18–4:1) |
| 1. Wives and husbands                                   | (3:18–19)  |
| 2. Children and parents                                 | (3:20–21)  |
| 3. Servants and masters                                 | (3:22–25)  |
| 4. Masters and servants                                 | (4:1)      |
| D. Considered in General                                | (4:2–6)    |
| 1. A petition for intercession                          | (4:2–4)    |
| 2. Our walk and our speech                              | (4:5–6)    |
| V. Personal: The Friends of Paul                        | (4:7–17)   |
| A. Concerning Tychicus and Onesimus                     | (4:7–9)    |
| B. Concerning Aristarchus and Marcus                    | (4:10)     |
| C. Concerning Justus                                    | (4:11)     |

|                              |           |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| D. Concerning Epaphras       | (4:12–13) |
| E. Concerning Luke and Demas | (4:14)    |
| F. Concerning the Lycans     | (4:15–17) |
| Conclusion                   | (4:18)    |

## Notes and Observations

- (1:3–4). The constant ministry of prayer. Prayer remains the one persevering reality for both the ministry and the individual Christian—yet how often prayer is laid aside for other issues!
- (1:4–8). Note the close association of faith, hope and love, which is almost characteristic of the Apostle's writing and concerns (e.g., 1 Cor. 13:13; 1 Thess. 1:3; 5:8).
- (1:9–12). One of the Apostle's "Prison Prayers," all of which are profound and penetrating. Under house arrest and unable to directly evangelize, he gave himself to prayer and contemplation. It was either prayer or preaching, either evangelization or prayerful contemplation.
- (1:11). The Lord is the one source of our strength. This is borne out in such passages as Eph. 6:10–20. How foolish and unbelieving to seek strength and power elsewhere!
- (1:13). Lit: "the Son of His love" [τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἀγάπης αὐτοῦ]. The Lord Jesus is the focus of both God the Father and the believer. Are we taken up with his love and our love to him?
- (1:13). Salvation revealed as a translation from one kingdom to another. Such is necessarily life-transforming.
- (1:14–20). A glorious passage concerning the supremacy and preeminence of the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark v. 17, [τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν], i.e., "coheres." The universe coheres—is held together by his fiat decree!
- (1:20). Peace by the blood of his cross—a succinct statement and reality. Do we have such peace both with God and from God?
- (1:23). A stringent warning! [εἰ γε ἐπιμένετε τῇ πίστει], "If indeed..." Not everyone who professes possesses. Godly, scriptural perseverance carries great assurance. "Having been

- thoroughly and continuing to be grounded” [τεθεμελιωμένοι, perf.]. The foundational realities of the gospel: repentance, faith, justification, adoption and sanctification are essential.
10. (1:27). A phrase which points to our union with Christ, a union which is evidenced by our behavior.
  11. (1:28). Gospel preaching is to be authoritative [καταγγέλλομεν], exhortative or confrontational [νουθετοῦντες], substantial [διδάσκοντες] and persevering [παραστήσωμεν πάντα ἄνθρωπον τέλειον].
  12. (1:29). “Labor” [κοπιῶ], i.e., labor to the point of exhaustion. The ministry, if it is faithful, is a consuming work!
  13. (2:3). Jesus Christ is the “Divine Thesaurus” [οἱ θησαυροὶ τῆς σοφίας καὶ γνώσεως]! He is the treasure chest of God’s wisdom and knowledge, of grace, mercy and love. To possess Christ is to possess all of God’s treasures!
  14. (2:6–7). The vital and necessary connection between the conversion experience and the subsequent life. [ἐρριζωμένοι καὶ ἐποικοδομοῦμενοι ἐν αὐτῷ], “having been and continued to be rooted (perf. ptc.) and continuing to be built up (pres. pass. ptc.) in Christ.”
  15. (2:8). A never-ending warning and necessary exhortation. Philosophy begins with man; theology begins with God. Philosophy is a bad master, but can be a good servant—if it possesses the right presuppositions.
  16. (2:9). The second occurrence of “fullness” [τὸ πλήρωμα] in this epistle (1:19; 2:9). Such fullness is found in Christ, not in an assumed “knowledge” [γνώσις]. A direct assault upon an incipient Gnosticism.
  17. (2:11–12). What is the significance of circumcision and its relation to baptism? This reference is to a spiritual circumcision of the heart [regeneration], the sign of the New or Gospel Covenant. There is no argument for baptism replacing circumcision—and this baptism is by immersion [βαπτισμός, from βαφ, depth]. Had sprinkling been the mode, the wording would be distinct, as the term sprinkling [ῥαντισμός] was common.

18. (2:14). A figure for the ancient custom of nailing an accusation on the criminal's cross at execution (Matt. 27:37; Jn. 19:19–22). All of our sins were nailed to our Lord's cross and blotted out forever! His death sealed our forgiveness.
19. (2:15–19). The spiritual victory of the cross has great and practical implications for our Christian experience.
20. (2:20). Not “dead,” but “died” [ἀπεθάνετε, aor., 3:3], i.e., a figure for the believer's union with Christ in his death, meaning that the reigning power of sin has been broken—definitive sanctification.<sup>475</sup> See Rom. 6:1–14. Union in Christ's death—the reigning power of sin has been broken; union in his resurrection life—the Holy Spirit becomes the dynamic of the new life in Christ.
21. (2:20–23). A mere external religion may be strict, but be graceless and exhibit only a self-righteousness.
22. (3:1–17). The new life in Christ—the result of the believer's union with him—must necessarily be demonstrated in the life!
23. (3:14). “Bond” [σύνδεσμος] is the sash which binds the flowing garments to the body. A fit figure for true Christian love which holds all the graces together.
24. (3:16). Note the closeness of being filled with the Spirit and vocalizing our faith in singing and reciting spiritual hymns and songs (Eph. 5:18–20).
25. (3:18–19). Mark the equity in the marriage relationship when the Divine order is maintained.
26. (3:20–21). The God-blest family is one in which the father rules in love and the children return this in loving obedience.
27. (3:22–4:1). What a difference grace makes for the good of all! See the parallel of this entire section in Eph. 6:1–9.
28. (4:2–4). Prayer is always both the great priority and the practical Christian approach to all things. Yet how often we

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<sup>475</sup> See pp. 254.

are too busy to pray! By grace and experience, may we have the right priorities.

29. (4:5–6). Our conversation and behavior toward the unconverted may be the first step in evangelism.
30. (4:7–17). The Lord gave Paul many helpers when the need arose. May our God be so disposed toward those who diligently labor in the cause of Christ!

# The Thessalonian Epistles

## Introduction

The Epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians were written by the Apostle Paul during his eighteen month stay at Corinth on his second missionary journey within a few months of leaving Thessalonica (1 Thess. 3:1–7; Acts 18:5) (c. 52–53). The issues treated in these letters reveal the trials of this church, its great faithfulness and well-known testimony (1 Thess. 1:3–9; 2 Thess. 1:3–5).

These two epistles are the second and third letters written by the Apostle which have been preserved, following his Epistle to the Galatians.<sup>476</sup> These two letters are the earliest compendium of Christian truth, covering both doctrinal and practical matters.<sup>477</sup> As in the Epistles of James and Galatians, there is mention of the opposition of the Jews against Christianity.<sup>478</sup>

Note: What began with the letter to the Galatians now became the standard practice for the Apostle. With the extension of his ministry into Europe, accompanied with a greater geographical and evangelistic outreach far from the Syrian Antioch and necessary long-term distant ministries, it became necessary for him to write letters and send them through his associates. This providentially preserved such writings which would become the larger part of the New Testament canon. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, his written ministry would span the Roman world. What would we do without Paul's Epistles?

During his second missionary journey, the Apostle Paul, with Silas, Luke and Timothy, entered Europe by way of Troas and Philippi.<sup>479</sup> Luke evidently remained at Philippi.<sup>480</sup> From

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<sup>476</sup> See pp. 113–114.

<sup>477</sup> See pp. 214–217 for the chronological order of New Testament books.

<sup>478</sup> See p. 108, Note.

<sup>479</sup> See p. 117 for a summary of the Apostle's second missionary journey. See pp. 119–121 for the journey from Troas to Philippi.

<sup>480</sup> See p. 120–121.

there they journeyed west on the *Via Egnatia*<sup>481</sup> through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica.<sup>482</sup>

The length of his ministry at Thessalonica is unknown, and may have extended well beyond the three Sabbaths days in the local synagogue.<sup>483</sup> Having to cut his ministry short due to persecution, Paul and his party left Thessalonica and journeyed south to Berea, off the *Via Egnatia*, and so away from immediate Jewish antagonism for an extended time.

When Jewish persecutors finally found Paul at Berea, he was taken to the sea by his new converts and put aboard a ship to Athens.<sup>484</sup> Timothy, who had been sent back to Thessalonica evidently met Paul at Athens and was immediately sent back to Thessalonica. They met once again when Paul had arrived at Corinth, and Timothy was sent back with a letter we know as 1 Thessalonians (1 Thess. 1:1; 2:1–8). Paul himself intended to visit them, but was hindered (1 Thess. 2:11, 18). Upon Timothy's return and report, Paul sent the second letter (2 Thess. 1:1; 2:2).<sup>485</sup>

The basic information concerning both letters may be considered together, as these were written within a few months of each other and to the same church.

### Authorship

The internal evidence is found in 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:18; 2 Thess. 1:1; 3:17. The vocabulary and style are definitely Pauline. The external evidence for 1 Thessalonians is adequate: the *Didache* (c. 100–120), Ignatius (c. 108), Shepherd of Hermas (c. 100–150), Marcion's canon (c. 140), the Muratorian canon (c. 180), Irenaeus (c. 180) Tertullian (c. 200) and Clement of Alexandria (c. 200). The external evidence for 2 Thessalonians is substantial,

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<sup>481</sup> For a description of the *Via Egnatia*, see pp. 121–122.

<sup>482</sup> See pp. 126–127.

<sup>483</sup> See p. 127–129.

<sup>484</sup> See pp. 129–130.

<sup>485</sup> See p. 129 for a synopsis of 1 and 2 Thessalonians and Paul's concerns.



including: Iganitius, Polycarp (c. 140), Justin Martyr (c. 150), The Muratorian canon, Irenaeus and the Marcion canon.

### Provenance and Date

Written from Corinth during Paul's eighteen month stay and ministry there, c. 52–53. The second letter followed the return of Timothy after delivering the first letter. These are two of Paul's most personal and revelatory letters, the others being 2 Corinthians and Philippians.

### Theme

Both letters are mainly practical and eschatological,<sup>486</sup> concerned with the return of the Lord (1 Thess. 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13–18; 5:2–4, 23; 2 Thess. 1:7–10; 2:1–12; 3:5). These early epistles reveal more specifics about the second coming of our Lord than the remainder of the Pauline corpus.

## 1 Thessalonians

### Occasion and Purpose

This first letter was occasioned by the arrival of Timothy at Corinth from Thessalonica with a report on the circumstances and issues relevant to the church (2:6–7): the good news—their steadfastness in the face of persecution (1:3–9; 2:14ff; 3:6). The bad news—some questioned Paul's motives and character (2:3–12), pagan immoral and unethical practices still occurred among them (4:3–8) and some needed admonishment concerning practical Christianity (5:12–22).

The purpose was to address the various immediate concerns: to rejoice in their faithfulness, to defend his character and motives, exhort them to godly living, to reveal the realities of the second coming of our Lord in answer to the question of those who die as believers (4:13–18) and to explain his inability to return to minister to them (2:17–18).

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<sup>486</sup> Eschatological, fr. the Gk. ἔσχατος, "final," and so dealing with final things, i.e., prophecies and the end times.

## Theme and Characteristics

The theme of our Lord's return runs throughout the letter: The Return of our Lord is: a Saving Truth (Chap. 1), a Stimulating Truth (Chap. 2), a Stabilizing Truth (Chap. 3), a Satisfying Truth (Chap. 4) and a Sanctifying Truth (Chap. 5).

Distinct characteristics: This, more than any other letter by Paul, is characterized by simplicity, gentleness and affection—his most personal letter. Although there are possible allusions, no quotations are made from the Old Testament Scriptures. There are germs of thought which would later be expressed in detail in Paul's later letters, e.g., the Christian's armor (Cf. 5:8 with Eph. 6:10–18), believers' duty toward their ministers (Cf. 5:12–13 with 1 Cor. 9:2–15). The repeated trilogy of faith, hope and love (1:3; 5:8).

Our Lord is mentioned twenty-eight times: "The Lord Jesus Christ" five times, "Christ Jesus" or "Lord Jesus" eight times and "Lord," "Christ" and "Son" fifteen times. 5:23 is the first mention of the tripartite nature of a regenerate person: body, soul and spirit. Finally, Paul's repeated reminders to the church (1:5; 2:1; 2:2; 2:5; 2:9; 2:10; 2:11; 3:3; 3:4; 4:2; 4:6; 4:9; 4:11; 5:1; 5:2).

## Outline

A simple outline which gives the general flow of the letter as pertaining to the second coming of Christ:

|                 |            |
|-----------------|------------|
| Looking Back    | (1:1–3:13) |
| Looking Forward | (4:1–5:28) |

The prominent notes are:

|                       |            |
|-----------------------|------------|
| A Word of Exultation  | (1:2–10)   |
| A Word of Explanation | (2:1–3:13) |
| A Word of Exhortation | (4:1–5:24) |

## Analysis

|                                             |            |
|---------------------------------------------|------------|
| Salutation                                  | (1:1)      |
| The writers, the Readers and the Greeting   |            |
| I. Personal: Relations to the Thessalonians | (1:2–3:13) |
| A. The Character of the Church              | (1:3)      |
| 1. Work of Faith                            | (1:3)      |
| 2. Labor of Love                            | (1:3)      |

|                                                  |             |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 3. Patience of Hope                              | (1:3)       |
| B. The Election of the Church                    | (1:4–7)     |
| 1. The truth of election                         | (1:4)       |
| 2. The Evidences of election                     | (1:5–7)     |
| C. The Reputation of the Church                  | (1:8–10)    |
| 1. The breadth of their testimony                | (1:8)       |
| 2. The reality of their testimony                | (1:9)       |
| 3. The Focus of their testimony                  | (1:10)      |
| D. Paul's Conduct toward the Church              | (2:1–12)    |
| 1. His ministry                                  | (2:1–2)     |
| 2. His motive                                    | (2:3–6)     |
| 3. His meekness                                  | (2:7–10)    |
| E. Paul's Reception by the Thessalonians         | (2:13–16)   |
| 1. Their perception                              | (2:13)      |
| 2. Their performance                             | (2:14)      |
| 3. Their persecution                             | (2:15–16)   |
| F. Paul's Concern for the Church                 | (2:17–3:10) |
| 1. His desire                                    | (2:17)      |
| 2. His hindrance                                 | (2:18)      |
| 3. His joy                                       | (2:19–20)   |
| 4. His warning                                   | (3:1–4)     |
| 5. His fear                                      | (3:5)       |
| 6. His comfort                                   | (3:6–8)     |
| 7. His joy                                       | (3:9)       |
| 8. His intercessions                             | (3:10)      |
| G. Paul's Prayer for the Church                  | (3:11–13)   |
| 1. For their abundance in love                   | (3:11–12)   |
| 2. For their blamelessness in holiness           | (3:13)      |
| II. Practical: Instructions in Doctrine and Life | (4:1–5:25)  |
| A. The Problem of Sexual Immorality              | (4:1–8)     |
| 1. A general exhortation                         | (4:1–3)     |
| 2. A Specific exhortation                        | (4:4–8)     |
| B. The Problem of Social Conduct                 | (4:9–12)    |
| 1. An exhortation to brotherly love              | (4:9–10)    |
| 2. An exhortation to Industriousness             | (4:11–12)   |
| C. The Problem of the State of the Dead          | (4:13–18)   |
| 1. Believers are not to have hopeless sorrow     | (4:13)      |
| 2. A resurrection faith                          | (4:14)      |
| 3. The second coming revealed                    | (4:15–17)   |
| 4. The comfort of anticipation                   | (4:18)      |
| D. The Problem of Times and Seasons              | (5:1–11)    |

- 1. Living in expectation (5:1–4)
- 2. Walking as children of light (5:5–8)
- 3. Living in spiritual comfort and edification (5:9–11)
- E. Concluding Exhortations (5:12–25)
  - 1. The right attitude toward their ministers (5:12–13)
  - 2. A summary of Christian ethics (5:14–15)
  - 3. A summary of practical admonitions (5:16–22)
  - 4. A benediction for their sanctification (5:23–24)
- The Conclusion (5:26–28)
  - A. A final plea for prayer (5:25)
  - B. A final token of Christian love (5:26)
  - C. A final command (5:27)
  - D. The closing benediction (5:28)

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:2–3). What a blessing when one's memory is taken up with the faithfulness of new converts!
2. (1:4–10). The fruits of their Divine choice to salvation were evidently manifest. This demonstrates the practical context of Divine election (Eph. 1:3–14; Col. 3:12).
3. (2:2). Paul persevered in his calling, in spite of great adversity. Is any Christian called not to suffer adversity?
4. (2:3–6). This world abounds in ulterior motives—but the gospel ministry must ever be completely honest and forthright.
5. (2:7–8). A loving, gentle, self-sacrificing ministry glorifies God.
6. (2:11). Holiness becomes the gospel ministry; sinfulness precludes God's blessing and brings judgment.
7. (2:12). Doctrine is hypocritical and contradictory without a holy, consistent life.
8. (2:13). We must look beyond the preacher to God as revealed in His Word. Do we receive God's Word as such, or do we fail to consider the source?
9. (2:14–16). The great tragedy of Jewish unbelief runs throughout Scripture. Do we believe and submit to God's truth?
10. (2:18). The devil often works through human instrumentality. Do we see beyond "flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:10–12)? If not,

then we will not understand the nature of our spiritual warfare.

11. (2:19–20). What a joy and blessing are those who are converted through our witness and ministries!
12. (3:2–4). Believers are called to suffer opposition. Are we aware of this? Are we easily discouraged in our walk, experience and witness?
13. (3:10–13). Prayer is the most arduous work a Christian can engage in in this life. Do we persevere until we either receive an answer or the Lord reveals His will in another direction? Are we specific in our prayers?
14. (4:3–8). Sexual immorality may be condoned by the world and masked by society, but it is a heinous sin for the believer! Such a one sins against God, His Law, his conscience, his marriage vows, his spouse and his church!
15. (4:9ff). True Christian “brotherly love” is instinctive of true converts. This is a manifestation of the reality of converting grace, which is by necessity life-transforming.
16. (4:11). Industriousness—being responsible and self-sufficient—is a mark of true Christianity. This is especially true in the modern welfare state. Welfare is a form of slavery.
17. (4:13–18). The second coming of the Lord Jesus is a glorious truth which ought to affect us and comfort us in our present experience. Do we live with such a reality? Does it spur us on in our lives? (Tit. 2:13; Rev. 22:20).
18. (4:17). The words “caught up” [ἄρπαγησόμεθα, fr. ἄρπάζω, “to seize”] in Latin [*rapiemur*] are the source of our English word, “Rapture.” Other terms are: *parousia* [παρουσία], “presence, coming, arrival” (1 Thess. 4:15) and *apocalupsis* [ἀποκαλύψεις], “revealing, unveiling” (2 Thess. 1:7).
19. (5:1–11). As children of light, we must walk as such (Eph. 5:8; 1 Jn. 1:7)! The tenor of one’s life—lifestyle, daily walk, moral character—is a testimony to one’s spiritual state and condition.
20. (5:12–13). There are several exhortations to care for ministers (Matt. 10:9–10; 1 Cor. 9:1–14; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 5:17–20). Paul well understood the life of the preacher and pastor; sadly,

many do not. The church is greatly blest who has a faithful pastor!

21. (5:14–22). A gathering of short admonitions as Paul closes this letter. How full, pungent and necessary, as Paul's mind races through the necessities for a sound and faithful church!
22. (5:17). We single out one for consideration. Lit: "unceasingly, keep on praying!" We should live with an attitude of prayer, with constant communion with our Heavenly Father.
23. (5:23–24). Sanctification is not optional; it is essential. It cannot be separated from justification. This is Paul's overall argument in Romans 1–8: Whom God saves from among condemned mankind He justifies, and whom He justifies He necessarily sanctifies, and whom He sanctifies, He inevitably glorifies. See also: 1 Cor. 1:30–31; 1 Thess. 4:3ff; 2 Thess. 2:13; 1 Jn. 3:9.
24. (5:25). Every believer needs prayer! The Apostle was not ashamed to ask for the prayers of his own converts.

## 2 Thessalonians

### Occasion and Purpose

This second letter is supplementary to the first, but with a stern tone and stronger language concerning the fate of those who believe not (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:3 with 2 Thess. 1:6–9; 2:11–12), those who are idle (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:14 with 2 Thess. 4:11) and the readers of this second letter (Cf. 1 Thess. 5:27 with 2 Thess. 3:14).

This second letter deals with misunderstanding and misrepresentation concerning the return of the Lord. Some misunderstood eschatological events, holding that the Day of the Lord had either already passed or that it was being fulfilled—a natural tendency in a time of great persecution. Someone had forged a letter allegedly from Paul, which also led to such misunderstanding (2:2).

The Apostle's purpose was manifold: first, he wanted them to know is thankfulness for their increasing steadfastness (1:1–4). Second, he revealed that the return of our Lord would deliver them from persecution and exact punishment upon unbelievers (1:5–12). Third, he calmed their anxiety concerning false teaching (2:1–12). Fourth, he admonished them to keep his commands (2:13–3:5). Fifth, he gives additional commands concerning the unruly and idle (3:6–15). Finally, he mentions his own signature in view of the false and misleading letter (2:2; 3:16–18).

### Characteristics

The dominant theme is the return or Second Coming of Christ and the events which must precede this momentous event: a time of final apostasy and the rise of the final anti-Christ (2:3–12). The return of our Lord will mark a time of horrible righteous judgment upon persecutors and unbelievers, as well as a glorious time for believers (1:4–10).

Encouragements to steadfastness (1:3–5, 11–12; 2:1–2, 13–17; 3:3–5, 16) and an extended warning concerning indolence on the part of some because they thought the day of Christ was either past or imminent (3:6–15).

The names of our Lord in this very brief letter occur twenty-two times: "Lord Jesus Christ," ten times; "Lord Jesus," once; "Christ," three times; "Lord," seven times; and "Lord of peace," once.

### Outline

Two three-fold outlines help gain a grasp of this letter:

|                        |           |
|------------------------|-----------|
| Introduction           | (1:1–2)   |
| The Preliminary Issues | (1:5–12)  |
| The Prophetical Issues | (2:1–17)  |
| The Practical Issues   | (3:1–16)  |
| Conclusion             | (3:17–18) |

Or

|              |                   |          |
|--------------|-------------------|----------|
| Pastoral:    | A Word of Comfort | (1:1–12) |
| Prophetical: | A Word of Caution | (2:1–17) |
| Practical:   | A Word of Command | (3:1–18) |

## Analysis

|                                                                  |           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| The Salutation                                                   | (1:1–2)   |
| The writers, Readers and Greeting                                |           |
| I. Expectation: The Comfort Given Them in Their Affliction       | (1:3–12)  |
| A. Paul's Thanksgiving                                           | (1:3–5)   |
| 1. It is prayerful                                               | (1:3)     |
| 2. It is joyful                                                  | (1:4)     |
| 3. It is hopeful                                                 | (1:5)     |
| B. Paul's Encouragement                                          | (1:6–12)  |
| 1. God's righteous judgment                                      | (1:6–9)   |
| 2. God's glorious recompense                                     | (1:10–12) |
| II. Explanation: The Events Preceding The Day of The Lord        | (2:1–12)  |
| A. Paul calms their anxieties                                    | (2:1–2)   |
| B. Paul explains the apostasy                                    | (2:3–12)  |
| 1. Preceding events: Apostasy                                    | (2:3a)    |
| 2. Preceding person: Anti-Christ                                 | (2:3b–12) |
| III. Encouragement: The Renewed Thanksgiving and Prayer for Them | (2:13–17) |
| A. Exhortation                                                   | (2:13–15) |
| 1. Thanksgiving for sovereign grace                              | (2:13–14) |
| 2. Exhortation to steadfastness                                  | (2:15)    |
| B. Prayer                                                        | (2:16–17) |
| IV. Exhortation: The Exhortation to Practical Christian Duties   | (3:1–15)  |
| A. Exhortation to Prayer                                         | (3:1–5)   |
| 1. A petition for intercession                                   | (3:1–2)   |
| 2. The faithfulness of the Lord                                  | (3:3–5)   |
| B. Example of Behavior                                           | (3:6–9)   |
| 1. The Command to separation                                     | (3:6)     |
| 2. The Example of Paul                                           | (3:7–9)   |
| C. Command for Behavior                                          | (3:10–15) |
| 1. The Command against indolence                                 | (3:10)    |
| 2. The report concerning busybodies                              | (3:11)    |
| 3. The renewed command to industriousness                        | (3:12)    |
| 4. The exhortation to steadfastness                              | (3:13)    |
| 5. The renewed command to separation                             | (3:14–15) |
| The Conclusion                                                   | (3:16–18) |
| A. Final prayer and benediction                                  | (3:16)    |
| B. Closing salutation and identification                         | (3:17–18) |



## Notes and Observations

1. (1:3–5). Thanksgiving to God for a church faithful under persecution. How this has been true throughout the centuries! We should intercede and give thanks for those who must suffer for the cause of Christ.
2. (1:7–10). The return of our Lord will be the greatest blessing to believers, but the most horrendous judgment and punishment upon unbelievers who did not believe and receive the truth.
3. (1:11–12). The first of four prayers in this short letter (2:16; 3:5, 3:16). Times of trial call for increased prayer. Although the Apostle's prayers are often complex, rich with theology and embrative of the highest Christian experience,<sup>487</sup> he wastes no words.
4. (2:1ff). Paul corrects a misunderstanding and misrepresentation. The second coming of Christ, which he had revealed in his first letter had intervening events first. Even in our present day, there is disagreement concerning the Rapture, the second advent, the millennium, etc. One truth remains uncontroverted—Jesus Christ is coming again, and we must not let eschatological speculation rob us of this glorious truth!
5. (2:3–12). The “Man of Sin,” the Son of Perdition,” is held to be the Anti-Christ. There have been many (1 Jn. 2:18), but he will be the final one, just prior to the return of our Lord.
6. (2:9ff). Satan has tremendous power. See the first two chapters of the Book of Job. Yet he is bound by God's sovereign power and eternal decree. And he is no match for our Lord and Savior (Matt. 4:1–11; Eph. 6:10–20; 1 Jn. 3:8).
7. (2:13). The free and sovereign grace of God is the determining factor, glorious reality and assured hope for the true people of God—His elect (Rom. 8:28–39; Eph. 1:3–14).
8. (2:14). We must consider the gospel in its full biblical context. It is the lynchpin of God's eternal redemptive

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<sup>487</sup> See especially the “Prison Prayers” of the Apostle, pp. 299–300. Each prayer is also analyzed with each “Prison Epistle” in this volume.

purpose, the message of salvation, redemption and deliverance from sin (Rom. 1:15–17). It is never a weak or failing message!

9. (2:15–17). The word “traditions” [παράδοσεις] means that which is conveyed orally or through writing. Biblical “traditions” are the Divinely-inspired writings which were first given orally to Moses, the prophets and the inspired Apostles, then inscripturated forever.
10. (3:1–2). Even an Apostle needs prayer for the advancement of the gospel and deliverance from evil men. No one is beyond the prayers and intercessions of fellow believers!
11. (3:3–5). Above and beyond all the confusion, opposition and consternation of our spiritual pilgrimage is the faithfulness of our Lord, working effectually in hearts, minds and lives.
12. (3:6–15). There ever seems to be persons who draw the wrong conclusions from the doctrinal teaching of Scripture. The extremes of antinomianism, legalism—and here, indolence and idleness—sadly characterize those who seek to align Scripture to their own predispositions. These thought that if the second coming had either passed or was imminent. They would wait and not work. The true Christian ethic is ever work while waiting.
13. (3:16). This benediction is ever needed. The peace which God gives supersedes both human peace and the troubles believers face.
14. (3:17). Paul’s personal signature, probably scrawled in large letters due to his infirmities, was distinct,<sup>488</sup> and evidently lacking in the false epistle (2:2).

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<sup>488</sup> For the infirmities of Paul and how it affected his writing, see pp. 50, 53–54, 240.

# The Pastoral Epistles

## Introduction

The letters of 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are known as the “Pastoral Epistles”<sup>489</sup> as these detail the nature and qualifications for the pastoral office and the issues of church order. Timothy and Titus were not themselves pastors in the sense of being identified with a given local assembly or flock as a shepherd or elder. They were the Apostolic delegates or representatives of Paul to various churches.

These epistles are mainly concerned with ecclesiastical matters: pastoral qualifications and regulations, the office and qualifications for deacons, church order and practice, the place of women in the church, the treatment of widows, public prayer and the danger of false teachers.

Note: The term “Pastoral Epistles” was first used of these three letters by D. N. Berdot in 1703 and followed by Paul Anton in 1726. These were written to Timothy and Titus who were sent by the Apostle Paul to administer ecclesiastical matters in various churches. These were not pastors themselves, but administered with delegated authority from the Apostle. The only other personal letter was to Philemon.

The order and content: 1 Timothy (c. 63), Titus (c. 66–67) and 2 Timothy (c. 67). 1 Timothy is pastoral, Titus, less pastoral and 2 Timothy is mostly personal and Paul’s final letter before his martyrdom.

## The Pastoral Office

As these letters are termed the “Pastorals,” some comments concerning the nature and qualifications for the pastoral office should be considered. The two passages which form the *locus classicus* for the pastoral ministry are 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9. These are inclusive and detail both the character of the man and the qualifications for and duties of the office. It must be noted that more emphasis is given to the pastor’s character and moral qualifications than to alleged gifts or abilities. This is vital to comprehend, as gifts cannot compensate for grace. A graceless

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<sup>489</sup> See pp. 230–231 for the classification of the Pauline Epistles.

minister is a curse to a church. A pastor is only functional and effectual as he is wholly dedicated to the Divine call and its exercise. Failure in the gospel ministry derives from failure of character, not from failure in alleged gifts and abilities.

| Qualifications for the Pastoral Office                                                                 |                                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Timothy 3:1–7                                                                                        | Titus 1:5–9                                                                    |
| Blameless                                                                                              | Blameless as the Steward of God                                                |
| Husband of one Wife                                                                                    | Husband of one Wife                                                            |
| Vigilant, sober, of good behavior                                                                      | Not self-willed                                                                |
| Not given to Wine                                                                                      | Not given to Wine                                                              |
| No striker, not given to filthy lucre                                                                  | No striker, not given to filthy lucre                                          |
| Given to Hospitality                                                                                   | Lover of Hospitality                                                           |
| Patient, not a Brawler                                                                                 | Not soon angry, a Lover of good men                                            |
| Not covetous                                                                                           | Just, holy, temperate                                                          |
| One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity                 | Having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly                         |
| Apt to Teach                                                                                           | Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught                          |
| Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil               |                                                                                |
| He must have a good report of them that are without, lest he fall into reproach and snare of the devil | He may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers |

The passages after 1 Tim. 3:1–7 and Tit. 1:5–14, including personal instructions to these men, are 1 Tim. 4:13–16; 5:17–20; 6:11–14, 20; 2 Tim. 1:13; 2:1–3, 15–16, 24–26; 4:1–5; Tit. 2:1,

7–8, 15; 3:1, 9–10, all of which are directly applicable to the gospel ministry and pastorate.

Note the various terms for the pastoral office and its ministry. There are at least nine associated terms:

- “Pastor” (ποιμήν), “shepherd” (Acts 20:28). Although the term “pastor,” does not occur in the New Testament, the verb form does as “feed,” i.e., “shepherd, care for, feed.” This is an inclusive term for the pastoral office. One should picture the inclusive work of a shepherd with the sheep—leading, caring, protecting, providing—and the primary work of feeding God’s flock with the Word.
- “Elder” (πρεσβυτέρος), used of age or rank (1 Tim. 5:1–2, 17; Tit. 1:5). This term emphasizes the dignity and maturity of the pastoral office. It is questionable that the New Testament had the office of non–preaching and non–pastoring elders. This term was also used of older people in the assembly. Context must determine its significance (1 Tim. 5:2; 1 Pet. 5:5).
- “Servant” (δοῦλος), “slave” (2 Tim. 2:24). This is the common designation of the writers of the New Testament Epistles (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 9:19; Gal. 1:10; Tit. 1:1; Jas. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1) and of the preacher and pastor (Col. 4:12). This is a high and demanding calling. The connotation of a “slave” is determined by his master. The Lord’s slaves have the highest calling!
- “Minister” (διάκονος), one who serves (Col. 1:7). Although this is the common designation for a “deacon,” it is used of preachers and pastors much more often than of deacons. The distinct might be that the pastor is God’s servant and the deacons are the church’s servants. There is a second term (ὑπηρέτης), lit: an under–rower, hence, a subordinate, one in submission and obedience to God (Acts 26:16; 1 Cor. 4:1).
- “Bishop” (ἐπίσκοπος), “Overseer” (1 Tim. 3:1). This is not a hierarchical term as used in Scripture, as though there was an

office above that of pastor,<sup>490</sup> but a term descriptive of the pastoral office. The pastor oversees the work of the ministry in the local assembly. See “steward.”

- “Preacher” (κηρυξ), “herald” (Rom. 10:14), one who heralds the gospel. This describes the content and passion of the gospel ministry, and points to a necessary preaching gift.
- “Teacher” (διδάσκαλος), one who instructs (1 Tim. 2:7). Instruction from the Scriptures is a major part of the pastoral ministry. Good preaching should contain a given amount of teaching, especially in a pastoral context. Both pastor and people should grow and progress both scripturally and spiritually under his ministry.
- “Evangelist” (εὐαγγελιστής), one who evangelizes (2 Tim. 4:5). Although some may be called to the office of an evangelist or missionary, the pastoral ministry and preaching must be evangelistic. It is a gospel ministry, not simply a “ministry” which is merely social or psychological [counseling].
- “Steward” (οἰκονόμος), the manager of a household, a superintendent, overseer (1 Cor. 4:1–2; Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 4:10). The pastor must faithfully superintend the affairs of the ministry and church in obedience to Scripture.

Note: The term “rule” (1 Tim. 3:4; 5:17; Heb. 13:7, 17, 24). Mark the synonyms: not ἄρχω, to rule as did the synagogue rulers, rabbis and Jewish officers (Jn. 3:1), but προϊστημι, lit: “to stand before, preside” hence, to lead by example and ἡγέομαι, to go before, lead, as a shepherd leads his flock. The term “rule” (κανὼν) is also used of the Scriptures as the standard of behavior and obedience (2 Cor. 10:13, 15), hence the term “canon.”<sup>491</sup> A final term translated “rule” is βραβεύω, which means “to decide or determine” (Col. 3:15). Spiritual realities are determining for the Christian.

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<sup>490</sup> The Apostolic office was above that of pastor; but the Apostles had no successors, as later hierarchical ecclesiasticism supposed.

<sup>491</sup> See pp. 105, 213, 223; Vol. III of this Survey of the Bible, pp. 55–58.

Concerning the pastoral office, two further thoughts present themselves: the devil's attempt to subvert the truth and the "faithful" or "trustworthy" statements:

As to the first, note 1 Tim. 3:6 and 2 Tim. 2:24–26. The devil cannot be passive; he must assault the institute of the church in its local expression—and the pastor is often the focus of his subversive work. Further, he seeks to attack and seduce certain church members who are vulnerable. Both types of attack are concerned with the truth. The local church is the God-ordained entity in this gospel economy. Both pastors and church members must pray and watch against such subversion.

As to the second, there are five statements in these Pastoral Epistles, occurring nowhere else in Paul's letters, which are directed to Timothy and Titus as "faithful" or "trustworthy," cardinal truths. Each begins or ends with "This is a faithful saying..." [πιστὸς ὁ λόγος]: (1) 1 Tim. 1:15, which declares the very essence of the gospel. (2) 1 Tim. 3:1, which emphasizes the nobility of the work of the ministry. (3) 1 Tim. 4:8–9, which gives a true perspective of the gospel ministry. Physical exercise is profitable, but temporary; godliness is more profitable both in time and in eternity. (4) 2 Tim. 2:11–13, which focuses on the rewards of suffering and the faithfulness of our Lord, in spite of human failing. (5) Titus 3:4–8, a summary of Pauline soteriology in Trinitarian terms—a summary to be kept in mind.

### The Time Frame (c. 63–67)

It is the universal testimony of early Christianity that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment and returned to his anticipated missionary travels, going to Spain, back to Macedonia, and finally visiting Crete and the churches of Lycus Valley in Asia Minor: Colossae, Laodecia and Hieropolis. There are passages in the Pastoral Epistles which cannot be fitted into a single imprisonment. Conybeare and Howson note:

...unless we are prepared to dispute the genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles, we must admit not only that St. Paul was liberated from his first imprisonment, but that he continued his Apostolic labors for at least some years afterwards....after St. Paul's Roman imprisonment he was traveling at liberty in Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3), Crete (Tit. 1:5), Macedonia (1Tim. 1:3),

Miletus (2 Tim. 4:20), and Nicopolis (Tit. 3:12), and that he was afterwards a second time in prison in Rome (2 Tim. 1:16–17).<sup>492</sup>

Paul wrote that he left Titus in Crete (Tit. 1:5), implying that he had been there and established churches, something not known from his previous ministry.<sup>493</sup> Further, if Paul wrote Hebrews, then he had been set at liberty and remained in Rome for a time (Heb. 13:3, 19, 23). Paul anticipated his release and journey to Philemon at Colossae (Col. 2:1; Phlm. 22) in the Lycus Valley.

If Clement, Paul's disciple and co-laborer in Phil. 4:3, was Clement of Rome, who wrote an Epistle to the Corinthians in the first century (c. 96), then we have a strong testimony for Paul's release, as he testifies that Paul preached to the extremity of the west [Spain] before his martyrdom. The Muratorian Canon (c. 170) also testifies to Paul's journey from Rome to Spain. Eusebius (263–349) writes of two imprisonments and Paul's final martyrdom. Chrysostom (d. 407) and Jerome (347–420) add their witness.<sup>494</sup>

Thus, the time frame for these Pastoral Epistles was (c. 63–67), between his two Roman imprisonments and final martyrdom. 2 Timothy, the final letter, was probably sent late in the fall of the year 67 (2 Tim. 4:21) before the death of Nero in early the next summer (June 9, 68 AD).<sup>495</sup>

## Authorship

The authorship of the Pastoral Epistles was not questioned until the radical critics of the nineteenth century.<sup>496</sup> Contemporary critical scholars hold these letters to be either post-Pauline or deutero-Pauline [added by a later scribe] due to

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<sup>492</sup> Conybeare & Howson, *Op. cit.*, p. 740.

<sup>493</sup> Tit. 1:5, ἀπέλειπόν σε ἐν Κρήτῃ, a clear statement that Paul left Titus behind in Crete while he had moved on.

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 738–740 for the writings of Clement, Eusebius, Chrysostom and Jerome.

<sup>495</sup> See pp. 208–211.

<sup>496</sup> Two ancient heretical writers denied the Pauline authorship for different reasons: Marcion the Gnostic and Tatian, who accepted Titus but rejected the two letters to Timothy. See. Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, p. 308.



perceived differences in vocabulary [many words used only in the Pastorals. But the context and Paul's travels and prison stint may have created changes and even advancement in vocabulary], style [1 Tim. very ecclesiastical; 2 Tim. very personal], doctrinal emphases [warnings against alleged Gnostic influences, which would necessitate a late first to second century date] and church order [alleged to be too developed for the first century, but the pastoral instructions are ethical and practical, not hierarchical].

Holding to Divine inspiration and understanding the historical, doctrinal and ecclesiastical context should answer such objections. Mark the words of G. G. Findlay (1849–1919), outstanding British biblical scholar:

There is not a shred of historical evidence against the letters. The witness of the early Church to their place in the New Testament Canon and their Pauline authorship is as clear, full and unhesitating as that given to the other epistles.<sup>497</sup>

The internal evidence is ample (1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Titus 1:1) and the external evidence is abundant, including: Clement of Rome (c. 96), Ignatius (c. 110), Polycarp (c. 140), The Epistle of Barnabas (c. 70?–132), The Epistle of Diognetus (c. 130), Justin Martyr (c. 150), Athenagoras (133–190), Theophilus of Antioch (c. 170), Clement of Alexandria (150–215), Tertullian (180–220) Irenaeus (175) the Muratorian Canon (170), the ancient Syriac (c. 200) and the Old Latin (350).<sup>498</sup>

### The Recipients

Two of the letters were sent to Timothy and one to Titus. Each reveals the Apostle's close relationship with and confidence in these two younger associates and representatives. Timothy was of a somewhat timorous nature, being a younger man, and evidently needed more encouragement than Titus. Timothy's mother was Jewish and so Timothy was considered a Jew, and evidently was raised with scriptural influence (Acts 16:1–3; 2

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<sup>497</sup> G. G. Findlay, *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, p. 211, as quoted by Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, p. 309.

<sup>498</sup> For a concise discussion of the issues, see Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 253–260.

Tim. 1:5). Because of his Jewish ancestry, Paul circumcised him.<sup>499</sup> Titus was fully Greek, and thus Paul refused to have him circumcised (Gal. 2:1ff).

Paul had no natural progeny—no natural sons—and he most affectionately called both Timothy and Titus his spiritual “children” [τέκνον], implying that loving, intimate relationship of a father to a beloved child. He used the same term for Onesimus (1 Cor. 4:17; Phil. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2; 2:1; Tit. 1:4; Phlm. 10). He called Timothy his “own [true] child in the faith” [Τιμοθέω γνησίῳ τέκνῳ ἐν πίστει] and his “dearly beloved child” [Τιμοθέω ἀγαπητῷ τέκνῳ].

### Timothy

Timothy was Paul’s younger and closest companion and beloved associate throughout his ministry and travels. He was converted under Paul’s ministry during his first missionary journey at Lystra and taken by him as his closest associate<sup>500</sup> on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3).

He was Paul’s “child in the faith,” and he loved him as such, supervising his ordination (1 Tim. 1:2; 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:2–6), and often counseling him as his beloved son in the work (1 Tim. 1:18; 3:14–15; 4:6–16; 5:21–23; 6:11–16, 20; 2 Tim. 1:8, 13–14; 2:1–7, 15–16, 20–26; 3:14–17; 4:1–5). He was concerned about Timothy’s health, as he was evidently of a weak constitution (1 Tim. 5:23). Paul called him, as tried and proven, and as his beloved associate, “thou Man of God” (1 Tim. 6:11).

Timothy probably, as one of the “disciples,” witnessed the stoning of Paul at Lystra during the Apostle’s first missionary journey (Acts 14:19–21). From Lystra on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3), Timothy accompanied Paul throughout most of his ministry until his martyrdom (2 Tim. 1:4; 4:9–13, 21).

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<sup>499</sup> Jewish lineage was often reckoned through the mother.

<sup>500</sup> Timothy is mentioned by name 24 times in the New Testament. 6 times in Acts and 18 times in Paul’s letters, except the Epistles to the Galatians, Ephesians and Titus.

He was with Paul and Silas at Philippi, then left behind at Berea to minister there and at Thessalonica (Acts 17:14–16; 1 Thess. 3:2). He made a trip to Athens, then rejoined Paul at Corinth (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6). He was with Paul at Ephesus, where he was sent to Macedonia and Achaia with letters from the Apostle (Acts 19:21–22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 16:11). He was present in Macedonia when Paul wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1), and was present when Paul dictated Romans (Rom. 16:21). He also waited for the Apostle at Troas with others (Acts 20:5).

It is uncertain if Timothy accompanied Paul to his final trip to Jerusalem, but was with him during his first Roman imprisonment (Col. 1:1; Phil. 1:1; 2:19–23; Phlm. 1), and may have been imprisoned with Paul at that time (Heb. 13:23).

The only mention of Timothy during the intervening ministry was his being left at Ephesus to maintain order in the churches (1 Tim. 1:1–3). Finally, Paul wrote to him to come to Rome during his final imprisonment. This was Paul's final letter and it is filled with pathos and passion (2 Tim. 1:2–4; 4:9–13, 21).

Tradition holds that Timothy was martyred during the reign of either Domitian (assassinated 96 AD) or Trajan (98–117 AD). His identification as the Bishop of Ephesus is without foundation and implies a non-existent hierarchy in first century Christianity.

#### Titus

Titus was another of the Apostle's younger associates. He is not mentioned directly in the Book of Acts, but is known only through Paul's letters.<sup>501</sup> It is commonly supposed that he was converted at Antioch under Paul's ministry before the first missionary journey (Acts 11:25–26; Tit. 1:4). He became a test case for the circumcision of Gentiles before the Jerusalem

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<sup>501</sup> Titus is mentioned 13 times in the New Testament, all in the Pauline corpus: 9 times in 2 Corinthians, twice in Galatians and once each in 2 Timothy and Titus.

Conference, and may have later attended the conference with Paul and Barnabas (Gal. 2:1–22).<sup>502</sup>

The next mention of Titus is during Paul's extended stay at Ephesus during his third missionary journey. Titus was sent to Corinth to deal with various issues and was well-received and his labors were accepted (2 Cor. 7:4–7, 13–15). Paul was determined to go to Jerusalem with an offering for the Jewish believers (2 Cor. 8:6, 16–23) and intended to meet Titus at Troas, but the anticipated meeting did not take place (2 Cor. 2:13). They later met in Macedonia and Titus was sent back with a letter we know as 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:6, 16, 23).

The next reference to Titus is his being left by Paul at Crete to oversee the work after the Apostle's departure during the ministry between his Roman imprisonments (Tit. 1:4–5ff). The final reference is during Paul's final imprisonment when Titus had been sent to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4:10).

## 1 Timothy

1 Timothy was written by the Apostle Paul at the beginning of his short interval of freedom between the two Roman imprisonments (63).<sup>503</sup> Timothy had been left at Ephesus to supervise the work (1:3).

### Provenance and Date

This letter was written c. 63 from either Macedonia (1 Tim. 1:3) or Laodicea in the Lycus Valley (1 Tim. 6:21).<sup>504</sup> Timothy had been left at Ephesus to oversee the churches of that area as Paul's personal representative and to deal with irregularities.

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<sup>502</sup> See pp. 91–93 for the confrontation between Paul and Peter concerning the circumcision of Gentile believers and fellowship.

<sup>503</sup> See previous section introducing the Pastoral Epistles.

<sup>504</sup> The longer textual reading of 1 Tim. 6:21 is found in the Byzantine [*Stephanus*] text, but such longer endings are generally considered as traditional and not necessarily authoritative.

## Occasion and Purpose

False teachers, evidently both Christian and Jewish and perhaps early Gnostics,<sup>505</sup> were causing trouble in the Ephesian churches. Many details concerning church order and life needed correction.

This letter is both pastoral and personal and was written with a three-fold purpose: first, to warn Timothy against false teachers and their doctrines (1:4–11; 4:1–7; 5:15; 6:3–5, 20. Cf. Acts 20:17–32); second, to exhort Timothy about order and disorder in the church (2:1–15; 3:1–15); third, to encourage Timothy to be faithful, courageous and industrious in the face of opposition (1:2–3, 18–20; 3:14–15; 4:6–16; 5:21–23; 6:5, 11–21). The times were becoming increasingly dangerous, not only in society, but within the churches themselves.

## Outline

This letter may be simply divided into a two-fold outline:

- |                                 |             |
|---------------------------------|-------------|
| Challenges Mainly to the Church | (1:1–3:15)  |
| Charges Mainly to the Christian | (3:16–6:21) |

Or, a three-fold outline:

- |                              |             |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| A) Pastoral Commission       | (1:1–20)    |
| B) Ecclesiastical Regulation | (2:1–3:13)  |
| A) Pastoral Direction        | (3:14–6:21) |

## Analysis

- |                                                   |            |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Salutation                                        | (1:1–2)    |
| I. Instructions for Ecclesiastical Conduct        | (1:3–3:16) |
| A. Charge to Preserve the Purity of the Gospel    | (1:3–11)   |
| 1. The Loss of Truth                              | (1:3–4)    |
| 2. The Law of God                                 | (1:5–11)   |
| B. Thanksgiving for Paul's Relation to the Gospel | (1:12–17)  |
| 1. Benediction                                    | (1:12)     |
| 2. Description                                    | (1:13a)    |
| 3. Explanation                                    | (1:13b–16) |
| 4. Benediction                                    | (1:17)     |
| C. Reiteration of the Charge to Timothy           | (1:18–20)  |

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<sup>505</sup> There were several Gnostic groups before the end of the first century. See pp. 329–330.

|                                                |             |
|------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1. Reiteration                                 | (1:18a)     |
| 2. Vocation                                    | (1:18b)     |
| 3. Destruction                                 | (1:19–20)   |
| D. Regulations Concerning Public Worship       | (2:1–15)    |
| 1. The Duty of public prayer                   | (2:1–7)     |
| 2. The Manner of public prayer                 | (2:8–10)    |
| 3. Women and public prayer                     | (2:11–15)   |
| E. Qualifications Concerning Church Officers   | (3:1–13)    |
| 1. Qualifications for the pastoral office      | (3:1–7)     |
| 2. Qualifications for the diaconate            | (3:8–13)    |
| II. Instructions for Ministerial Conduct       | (3:14–5:25) |
| A. A Personal Word to Timothy concerning Truth | (3:14–16)   |
| B. Advice to Timothy in View of the Apostasy   | (4:1–16)    |
| 1. The apostasy prophesied                     | (4:1–3a)    |
| 2. The apostasy proscribed                     | (4:3b–5)    |
| 3. Ministerial faithfulness and apostasy       | (4:6–11)    |
| 4. A Personal admonition and encouragement     | (4:12–16)   |
| C. Attitude toward those within the Church     | (5:1–3)     |
| 1. Older men                                   | (5:1a)      |
| 2. Younger men                                 | (5:1b)      |
| 3. Older women                                 | (5:2)       |
| 4. Widows                                      | (5:3)       |
| D. Duty toward True Widows                     | (5:4–16)    |
| 1. Family responsibility                       | (5:4)       |
| 2. Ministerial discernment concerning widows   | (5:5–7)     |
| 3. Family responsibility                       | (5:8)       |
| 4. The widow's age and reputation              | (5:9–10)    |
| 5. The younger widow's scandal                 | (5:11–15)   |
| 6. Family responsibility                       | (5:16)      |
| E. Duty toward Elders                          | (5:17–25)   |
| 1. Treatment of worthy elders                  | (5:17–18)   |
| 2. Elders, sin and rebuke                      | (5:19–20)   |
| 3. Personal and miscellaneous Admonitions      | (5:21–26)   |
| III. Instructions for Miscellaneous Conduct    | (6:1–19)    |
| A. Instructions concerning Slaves              | (6:1–2)     |
| B. Description concerning False Teachers       | (6:3–5)     |
| C. Godliness and Wealth                        | (6:6–10)    |
| 1. Godly contentment                           | (6:6–8)     |
| 2. Ungodly discontentment                      | (6:9–10)    |
| D. Living in View of our Lord's Return         | (6:11–16)   |
| 1. Flee and fight                              | (6:11–12)   |

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| 2. A charge to keep           | (6:13)     |
| 3. A life of anticipation     | (6:14–16)  |
| E. Charge concerning the Rich | (6:17–19)  |
| F. Concluding Admonitions     | (6:20–21a) |
| Benediction                   | (6:21b)    |

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:2). Paul adds “mercy” to his salutation in his three pastoral letters (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit.1:4). Either because the times were perilous or preachers need more mercy than other believers. Both were and are true!
2. (1:2). There is a great bond between a father and son in the gospel ministry. Paul had two “sons” in the ministry: Timothy and Titus, and these were more precious to him than natural sons.
3. (1:5–11). Both legalism and antinomianism wreak havoc in churches. Remember, the law is good in its proper place and ministry (Rom. 7:7ff), but never apart from the gospel. It is the God–ordained medium for conviction of sin, but never its cure.
4. (1:12). The one great requirement for the gospel ministry and minister is faithfulness (1 Cor. 4:2). Faithful in doctrine, character and behavior.
5. (1:15). Self–perception is important; it is an absolute necessity in the gospel ministry! Sinners saved by grace.
6. (1:16). Paul’s conversion a pattern, a life–transforming experience and hope for the most sinful!<sup>506</sup>
7. (1:18–20). As mariners feared and sought to avoid shipwreck, so must ministers avoid the rocks of heresy and sin.
8. (2:1–2). Do we pray for all men, especially leaders, those in authority and officials? We must never take our freedom of religion for granted. It was purchased with imprisonment and blood.

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<sup>506</sup> For Paul’s life–transforming conversion, see pp. 72–78.

9. (2:5–6). Our Lord is not the mediator between God and man, but men. There is no generic salvation; it is intensely personal.
10. (2:6). The term “all” must be interpreted in its given context. Is the redemption, reconciliation or atonement actual, effectual, or only potential?
11. (2:7). Every true preacher is God–ordained [τίθημι, placed], i.e., placed in the ministry by God through a Divine call and proven through adversity and faithfulness.
12. (2:8–15). The headship and leadership of the man extends to church relationships. Men are to lead; the women are to be silent. The woman is not to exercise a teaching position in the local assembly.<sup>507</sup> Her domain is practical.
13. (3:2). “Blameless” [ἀνεπίληπτος], “unable to take hold of,” Nothing in the life which may be taken and used against him. “Husband of one wife. anarth., “a one–woman–kind–of–man,”<sup>508</sup> i.e., of unquestionable morality. “Of good behavior” [κόσμιον], i.e., organized. The ministry is no place for a disorganized man.
14. (3:3). A list of qualities which denote self–control, moderation and maturity.
15. (3:4–5). A minister’s family reveals who and what he is at home and in private.
16. (3:6). Youth, either in age or religious profession, has its pitfalls. What happens to a man’s profession once the energy and youthful enthusiasm wear off?
17. (3:8–13). Such requirements for deacons are high. Sadly, this is at times not the case. They are not to assemble as a

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<sup>507</sup> 1 Tim. 2:12, διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.. “But to teach, a woman, I do not allow... Mark the emph. The woman’s place is that of practical relationships and example. Tit. 2:4, the word “teach” is not the usual, formal term, [διδάσκω], but one which denotes to admonish or advise [σωφρονίζω].

<sup>508</sup> 1 Tim. 3:2, μιᾷς γυναικὸς ἄνδρα.



“board” to “balance” or oppose the pastor, but to help him. Deacons are to help the pastor by their service; the congregation by their prayers.

18. (3:15). Proper behavior in the house of God. Where is this admonition today in light of worship being replaced by contemporary, worldly music and entertainment?
19. (3:16). One of the most comprehensive doctrinal statements in Scripture concerning the humiliation and exaltation of our Lord (Cf. Phil. 2:5–11).
20. (4:1–3a). It is the nature of religion to degenerate. It ever begins with a departure from Scripture. Tradition, mysticism or presumption must never replace the Word of God.
21. (4:3b–5). Sin is not in “things,” but in the heart and mind. Sin must not be externalized; moderation must never become abstinence. We must call “sin” what Scriptures does, and stop calling “sin” what the Scripture does not.
22. (4:7). The religion of some derived from fables and an admixture of folklore and legalism.
23. (4:8). Physical exercise profits for a time. It has its place; godliness prepares for eternity.
24. (4:12–16). The gospel minister and pastor must give himself to the study of Scripture and relevant matters. He must meditate on the truth if he is to be profitable to the ministry and to his own people.
25. (5:1–3). The pastor is to be a godly gentleman to the elderly and a strong example to the younger ones.
26. (5:3–16). In our day of single parent households and divorced persons, immorality and misbehavior find a sanctuary within the church. Let the pastor beware!
27. (5:17–18). Pastoral recompense is a biblical principle. The congregation should pray for and pay the pastor, not starve him. This presupposes that he is faithful and feeds the flock of God.
28. (5:19–20). Even an elder is not above rebuke. He is primarily a fellow-believer, then an elder.

29. (5:23). An example of moderation. The Scriptures teach self-control and moderation, not total abstinence.
30. (6:1–5). These “servants” were slaves [δοῦλοι]. Early Christianity did not deal with the ethics of slavery, but many hold that its very principles would eventually undermine the system (e.g., Phlm. 10–19).
31. (6:5–8). Gain is not godliness, but godliness is great gain.
32. (6:10). Lit: “for a root of all kinds of evil is the love of money...”
33. (6:11–12). We must know when to flee, when to follow and when to fight.
34. (6:13–16). A Pauline *anacoluthon*,<sup>509</sup> very common in his letters, where he begins a thought, then breaks into a doctrinal description or a glorious doxology.
35. (6:17–19). Worldly riches vs. spiritual riches; immediate prosperity vs. eternal blessedness; gratification vs. anticipation.
36. (6:20–21). A closing admonition. Beware of those issues which distract from the gospel and its ministry.

## 2 Timothy

### Provenance and Date

This epistle was the final letter of the Apostle Paul before his martyrdom (4:6–8), written c. 67 AD. Roman persecution was wreaking havoc in the Empire and error was advancing in the churches of the Eastern Provinces (1:15). Paul himself was facing execution by the state. This letter contains the final words to his younger associate and “son” [τέκνον, his own child] in the faith and ministry.

Note: We are not informed of the place or circumstances of Paul's arrest. Different localities have been suggested. Because

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<sup>509</sup> *Anacoluthon*, a non-sequence of thought or a parenthetical statement. See E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*, pp. 720–724.

of the cloak and books left at Troas, this may have been the locality, as it implies a sudden, unprepared departure (4:13).

He may have been arrested as he preached, or may have been arrested through the influence of his enemies—either Jews (Acts 20:3) or Gentiles (Acts 19:24ff; 2 Tim. 4:14)—in Asia Minor.

Note: As Paul urged Timothy to come to him before winter (4:21), and Nero died early the following summer (Jun 9, 68), this letter may probably be dated about 67 AD.

During his first imprisonment, Paul was in a hired house with a given amount of freedom (Acts 28:30–31). He enjoyed privileges as a Roman citizen and the alleged crimes against him were seen as a fabrication and a religious difference within Judaism.

Now, he was a condemned Christian. Christianity had been proclaimed a *religio illicita* after the fire which destroy much of the city of Rome and blamed upon the Christians. Paul was its most-notorious leader, who had previously stood before Nero's court, and so had a record. As a Roman citizen, he would not be subjected to the horrible tortures and death of others, who were daubed with pitch and set afire as human torches for Nero's garden parties.<sup>510</sup>

He was now in a dungeon of the *Tullianum*<sup>511</sup> [later designated as the Mamertine Prison in Medieval times], called "the scepulcre" because the inmates were often eaten by rats. In this awful, cold, damp, vermin-ridden place, he was now chained (1:16) and awaited his execution. He had his first hearing, when everyone forsook him and he had to stand alone (4:16–17). For some reason, his sentence was providentially postponed, giving him time to write to Timothy. He wanted to spend his final days reading and studying (4:13, 21).

Even in this horrid environment, some evidently could visit him, and he could send his associates on missions (2 Tim. 1:4, 16–17; 2:8–10; 4:9–13, 21).

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<sup>510</sup> For the burning of Rome and the atrocities which followed, see pp. 208–210.

<sup>511</sup> The *Tullianum* ["spring" referring to its cistern] was located in the *Comitium* on the northeast slope of the Capitoline Hill. See pp. 200–201.

## Occasion and Purpose

The aged Apostle greatly desired to see his spiritual son and closest companion one more time. He also had need of various belongings. The purpose of writing was four-fold: first, to encourage and exhort Timothy (1:1–14; 2:1, 3, 7–13, 15–16, 19–26; 3:5, 14–17; 4:1–5, 14–15). Second, to urge Timothy to come to him in Rome immediately (1:4; 4:9–11, 21). Third, to give him one final warning against false teachers and the apostasy (1:15; 2:16–18; 3:1–9, 13; 4:3–4, 14–15). Fourth, to obtain necessary belongings and help (4:9–13).

Tychicus had been sent to Ephesus, perhaps with this information and urgent message, and would replace Timothy (4:12).

## Characteristics of 1 and 2 Timothy

1 Timothy is mainly pastoral; 2 Timothy is mainly personal.<sup>512</sup> In 1 Timothy, Paul was looking for acquittal; in 2 Timothy, Paul is looking through death to glory. It has been called the letter of “mingled gloom and glory.” “This epistle is the exultant cry of a dying conqueror.”<sup>513</sup>

Both letters abound in personal admonitions and encouragements to and for Timothy (1 Tim. 1:3–4, 18; 3:14–15; 4:6–16; 5:21–23; 6:11–13, 20–21; 2 Tim. 1:6–8, 13; 2:1–7, 14–16, 22–26; 3:14–17; 4:1–5, 21–22).

Both contain stringent warnings concerning the apostasy (1 Tim. 4:1–3; 2 Tim. 3:1–9). Both mention false teachers who seek to subvert the faith (1 Tim. 1:5–7, 19–20; 6:3–5; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17–19; 3:1–9, 13; 4:14–15). These were of three types: Heretical teachers among professing Christians who taught that the resurrection was already past (2 Tim. 2:16–18), those, probably Jewish, who held to erroneous views concerning the law (1 Tim. 1:4–11) and those who were and would be apostates in both doctrine and lifestyle (1 Tim. 4:1–3, 7; 2 Tim. 3:1–8).

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<sup>512</sup> No fewer than 23 individuals are named in this last letter.

<sup>513</sup> H. H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, p. 637.

In 2 Timothy, Paul is preoccupied with both death and life—and beyond death to eternal life (1:6, 10, 18; 2:8, 11, 12, 18; 3:12; 4:1, 6–8, 18). He faced death without fear, confident in his spiritual state and in the glorious promises of God. He, as our Lord, looked through death to the glory to come (Heb. 12:1–3; 2 Tim. 1:8–12; 2:8–12; 4:6–8, 18).

### Classic Passages

This final, personal letter contains several classic passages which are key to Christianity, the ministry and Paul's state of mind: 1:6–7, 10, 12, 13; 2:2, 3–7, 15, 19, 24–26; 3:1–7, 12, 16–17; 4:1–5, 6–8, 4:13. Several of these are commented upon under "Notes and Observations."

### Outline

This final epistle lends itself to a two-fold outline concerning both present and future realities:

|                    |            |
|--------------------|------------|
| Present Testings   | (1:1–2:26) |
| Predicted Testings | (3:1–4:22) |

A four-fold outline, with the theme of apostasy and spiritual declension:

|                                  |           |
|----------------------------------|-----------|
| Apostasy and Pastoral Fidelity   | (Chap. 1) |
| Apostasy and Spiritual Fidelity  | (Chap. 2) |
| Apostasy and Scriptural Fidelity | (Chap. 3) |
| Apostasy and Eternal Fidelity    | (Chap. 4) |

Hendriksen's four-fold outline, with the theme of "Sound Doctrine" is forceful:<sup>514</sup>

|                                |           |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Sound Doctrine: Hold on to it! | (Chap. 1) |
| Sound Doctrine: Teach it!      | (Chap. 2) |
| Sound Doctrine: Abide in it!   | (Chap. 3) |
| Sound Doctrine: Preach it!     | (Chap. 4) |

### Analysis

|                             |         |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Salutation and Introduction | (1:1–5) |
| A. Author                   | (1:1)   |
| B. Recipient                | (1:2)   |

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<sup>514</sup> Wm. Hendriksen, *Timothy and Titus*, Introduction to 2 Timothy.

|                                              |            |
|----------------------------------------------|------------|
| C. Greeting                                  | (1:3–5)    |
| I. Exhortations to Ministerial Steadfastness | (1:6–2:13) |
| A. The essential Qualities                   | (1:6–18)   |
| 1. A call for courage                        | (1:6–7)    |
| 2. A readiness to suffer                     | (1:8–10)   |
| 3. The testimony of Paul                     | (1:11–12)  |
| 4. An incentive to faithfulness              | (1:13–18)  |
| B. The Necessary Duties                      | (2:1–26)   |
| 1. Be strong and faithful                    | (2:1–2)    |
| 2. Endure hardness: ministerial metaphors    | (2:3–7)    |
| a. A soldier                                 | (2:3–4)    |
| b. An athlete                                | (2:5)      |
| c. A husbandman                              | (2:6–7)    |
| 3. Truths that encourage faithfulness        | (2:8–13)   |
| a. A true understanding of our Lord          | (2:8)      |
| b. The goal of Paul's suffering              | (2:9–10)   |
| c. The certainty of reward                   | (2:11–13)  |
| 4. Confronting False teachings               | (2:14)     |
| II. Exhortations to Doctrinal Soundness      | (2:14–4:8) |
| A. Confronting False Teachings               | (2:14–23)  |
| 1. The necessity of being prepared           | (2:15)     |
| 2. Avoiding the unprofitable                 | (2:16–19)  |
| 3. An appeal for separation                  | (2:20–23)  |
| B. A Pastoral attitude                       | (2:24–26)  |
| C. Apostates and Apostasy                    | (3:1–9)    |
| 1. Apostate lifestyle                        | (3:1–4)    |
| 2. Apostate religion                         | (3:5)      |
| 3. Apostates in action                       | (3:6–9)    |
| D. Sources of strength for endurance         | (3:10–17)  |
| 1. The example of Paul                       | (3:10–12)  |
| 2. The nature of Scripture                   | (3:13–17)  |
| E. The Closing Charge                        | (4:1–8)    |
| 1. The basis for this charge                 | (4:1)      |
| 2. The work of the ministry                  | (4:2–5)    |
| 3. The epitaph of Paul                       | (4:6–8)    |
| F. Concluding instructions                   | (4:9–18)   |
| 1. Command to come immediately               | (4:9)      |
| 2. Information on former associates          | (4:10–12)  |
| 3. Earthly and spiritual necessities         | (4:13)     |
| 4. Beware of an old foe                      | (4:14–15)  |
| 5. A parting testimony                       | (4:16–18)  |

## Notes and Observations

1. (1:1). Paul is facing death, yet is consumed with life. Note vv. 9–12.
2. (1:3). “Thoughts and prayers” are realities to the Christian, not the mere platitudes of most.
3. (1:5). There is no greater inheritance than saving truth. This is the blessing of God in time and in eternity.
4. (1:6). Preaching gifts must be “fanned into flame” [ἀναζωπυρεῖν]. We must be on fire spiritually for the fire to warm others.
5. (1:7). The preacher of the gospel must be fearless. Any timidity reflects not only on the preacher himself, but upon his Master and his message! The very glory of the gospel and the boldness of its truth demand boldness.
6. (1:8). The word “ashamed” is significant in this letter (1:8, 12, 16; 2:15). Shame implies embarrassment over one’s self, one’s actions, one’s companion or one’s beliefs. Paul deals with all of these.
7. (1:9). Our calling is eternal, Christo-centric and rendered effectual in free and sovereign grace.
8. (1:10). Death in its fullness is eternal exclusion from God under condemnation. Death has been completely nullified [καταργήσαντος] by virtue of our union with Christ, emptied of its power and dread. It is the very means to usher us into the glorious presence of our Lord. It holds no terrors, only the anticipation of glory, to be “ever with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17–18). May we have the faith to grasp this—the ultimate source of all boldness and blessing!
9. (2:1). We must give much consideration to the strength of grace. Grace quickens, sustains, enables and transforms—all by virtue of our union with Christ.
10. (2:2). True perpetuity is that of sound doctrine, not any ecclesiastical system or alleged connection.
11. (2:3–7). Apt ministerial metaphors: a soldier, an athlete and a husbandman or farmer. Paul uses them all with reference to himself as an Apostle and preacher. A soldier: Phil. 3:16,

- “walk,” lit: “march in step” [στοιχεῖν]; 1 Cor. 9:24–27, an athlete who trains and disciplines himself; 1 Cor. 3:6–9, a farmer, one who sows the word.
12. (2:9). The preacher may be bound, beaten, suffer the loss of property and be jailed, but the gospel cannot be bound. Many of our Baptist forefathers were beaten, imprisoned and tortured, but the gospel continued to flourish.<sup>515</sup>
  13. (2:10ff). We must always have the greater picture before us as preachers. If we become self-absorbed or limited, we may fail and give way to the opposition.
  14. (2:15). A great and determinative passage concerning the Word of God. “Study” [σπούδασον] means lit: “give the utmost diligence,” aor. imp., and the emphasis is upon Divine approval. “Rightly dividing” [ὀρθοτομοῦντα] signifies cutting a straight line. Hermeneutics is essential to be faithful to the Scripture and thus the gospel message.<sup>516</sup>
  15. (2:19). This reveals a “stereo” [στερεός, transl. “sure”] faith. The term means “strong.” In modern electronic equipment, “stereo” means “strong” because of at least two sources of sound. So here. (1) Objective: the Lord knows them that are His. (2) Subjective: let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. Do we have a stereo faith, witnessed by God and also by our godly conduct?
  16. (2:20–22). Biblical separation is not physical [monasticism], nor aesthetic [legalism], but spiritual, moral, ethical and practical.
  17. (2:24–26). Much attention must be given to the moral character of the minister and his attitude. He is a shepherd, not a pugilist; a spiritual father, not a slave driver; a teacher, not a self-appointed authoritarian; humble, not quick-tempered, proud and demanding; persevering, not abrupt or demeaning.

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<sup>515</sup> Consult the various Baptist histories which deal with the persecution of Baptists by both Romanists and Protestants in England, Europe and in the American colonies.

<sup>516</sup> See pp. 60–61, for cutting a straight line and working in *cilicium*.



18. (3:1–9). Nineteen things are attributed to these apostates—a full and complete description of religious men devoid of truth and grace. Religion may impress; grace sanctifies.
19. (3:10–11). Paul puts doctrine first. Doctrine must always have the priority, as it is determinative of the life and behavior. Cf. 3:16. What are the necessary derivatives of our doctrine?
20. (3:12). God has ordained opposition in this life and in the ministry of truth. We are spiritual aliens in a fallen, sinful world which hates God and His truth. What can we expect? Thus the repeated admonishments for godly boldness.
21. (3:15). What a tremendous blessing to know the Scriptures from early childhood! Blessed parent who teaches and blessed children who receive! We must never discount the modifying, determining effect of Scripture once learned. This is the effectual tool the Spirit of God uses to work salvation.
22. (3:16–17). One of the classic passages on Divine inspiration. Lit: “every Scripture is God-breathed...” [πᾶσα γραφὴ θεόπνευστος, sing.]. Every word, every grammatical and syntactical nuance, every idiom and grammatical construction is God-breathed.” Note that two of the four realities are negative: “correction...reproof...” How we must approach the Scriptures humbly and with a receptive, submissive spirit!  
 Note: “Perfect” is not the usual term [τέλειος], which means “complete,” but ἄρτιος, “fully limbed or symmetrically-developed.” The words “thoroughly furnished” [ἐξηρτισμένος] are the participial form, “completely outfitted.” “Unto all good works” is singular, i.e., “unto every good work” [πρὸς πᾶν ἔργον ἀγαθόν]. Does the Word of God have its complete work in our lives?
23. (4:1–5). The Apostle’s final ministerial charge to young Timothy. Preaching the Word with all God-given authority is the great, primary exhortation. “Be instant” [ἐπίστηθι] is lit: “Be there! When it is convenient and when it is inconvenient!” This final charge and exhortation is for

Timothy to completely full up [fulfill] his ministry. How many ministries are sadly unfulfilled!

24. (4:6–8). The Apostle’s epitaph. This has been commented on previously.<sup>517</sup> Paul was finally ready to “pull up stakes” and go home. He had no unfulfilled agendas or regrets. May these words push us onward to the very end and culmination of our lives and ministries!
25. (4:10). How the apostasy of Demas must have saddened the aged Apostle! They had prayed and ministered together, lived and traveled together—but now the world [τὸν νῦν αἰῶνα, lit: “the ‘now’ age”] had won out and he had apostatized. We see such in our day, sadly, who thought that “decisionism” was conversion, and opt out for being a “carnal [professing] Christian.”<sup>518</sup>
26. (4:11). John Mark is profitable at last!<sup>519</sup> It is not how one begins, but how he ends that proves his true worth or worthlessness in the work of God.
27. (4:13). Paul wrote, “Bring the books!” Perhaps no better statement has been made than that of C. H. Spurgeon:

Even an apostle must read....Paul is inspired, and yet he wants *books*! He has been preaching for at least thirty years, and yet he wants *books*! He had seen the Lord, and yet he wants *books*! He had had a wider experience than most men, and yet he wants *books*! He had been caught up into the third heaven, and had heard things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, yet he wants *books*! He had written the major part of the New Testament, and yet he wants *books*! The apostle says to Timothy and so he says to every preacher, “Give thyself unto reading.”

The man who never reads will never be read; he who never quotes will never be quoted. He who will not use the thoughts of other men’s brains. proves that he has no brains of his own. Brethren, what is true of ministers is true of all our

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<sup>517</sup> See pp. 55–56, 210–211.

<sup>518</sup> The modern doctrine of the “carnal Christian” is unscriptural. The contrast in Rom. 8:5ff is between the unconverted and converted, contrary to the assumption of modern Dispensational teaching.

<sup>519</sup> See pp. 97–98.

people. You need to read....as much as possible sound theological works, especially the Puritanic writers, and expositions of the Bible. We are quite persuaded that the best way for you to be spending your leisure, is to be either reading or praying. You may get much instruction from books which afterwards you may use as a true weapon in your Lord and Master's service....

Paul herein is a picture of industry. He is in prison; he cannot preach: What will he do? As he cannot preach, he will read....So if providence has laid you upon a sick bed,...if you cannot be working for God in public, mend your nets by reading. If one occupation is taken from you, take another, and let the books of the apostle read you a lesson of industry.

He says, "especially the parchments." ...Now, it must be "especially the parchments" with all our reading; let it be especially the Bible....<sup>520</sup>

Note: Many works on this passage either comment or quote the letter from prison by William Tyndale, the English martyr, to the king, for a warm coat and his biblical books and linguistic tools as he awaited execution. It is an amazing parallel in both spirit and content and well-worth reading.

If Paul the inspired Apostle, who had experienced the realities of heaven, wanted books to read and study, then we certainly need to follow suit! The minister must become a life-long student of the Scriptures and sound literature.

28. (4:16–18). Sadly, there are times when one must stand alone. Paul was sustained, not by human companionship, which may fail, but by the infallible Divine purpose and grace of God. The term "lion" ought to be taken figuratively as referring to the Roman government.

## Titus

### Provenance and Date

The epistle to Titus was written about the same time or shortly after 1 Timothy (c. 63–65) during the Apostle's ministry between

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<sup>520</sup> C. H. Spurgeon, *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, Vol. 9, pp. 668–669.

his Roman imprisonments.<sup>521</sup> Paul had left Titus at Crete as he had left Timothy at Ephesus (1:4–5), implying that he had been there previously. This is the shortest of the Pastoral Epistles and last letter Paul wrote before his arrest. Luther summarizes this letter: “This is a short epistle, but a model of Christian doctrine, in which is included, in masterly fashion, all that is necessary for a Christian to know and live by.”<sup>522</sup>

Several locations have been suggested as the place of writing. He may have written this letter from Corinth after he left Crete (?). He had probably not reached Nicopolis at that point, as tradition supposes.<sup>523</sup>

The Apostle’s frequent geographic moves during this time may reflect his knowledge that Christianity had been a year before declared a *religio illicita*, and he greatly desired to both extend his ministry as far as possible and also avoid apprehension.<sup>524</sup>

Titus had proven himself as a spiritual and capable leader. Paul had previously sent him to the troubled church at Corinth at least three times, as a careful study of 2 Cor. 2:12–13; 7:6–16; 8:6, 10, 16–24 affirm.<sup>525</sup> He was the man to be trusted in a difficult situation to remain faithful and effective.

### The Destination: Crete

The Island of Crete is located in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea, located some 100 miles south of the Greek mainland. It is the fifth largest island of the Mediterranean, 160 miles in length and eight to thirty-seven miles in width, with several mountains of the three ranges varying from 5,000 to 8,000 feet in elevation. The highest peak was the supposed birthplace of the Greek god Zeus.

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<sup>521</sup> See pp. 207–208.

<sup>522</sup> Quoted by D. Edmond Hiebert, *Op. cit.*, p. 346.

<sup>523</sup> See Tit. 3:12, “there” [ἐκεῖ], would denote that Paul was writing from a different location than Nicopolis.

<sup>524</sup> See pp. 208–2097.

<sup>525</sup> See Hiebert, *Ibid.*, p. 341.

The inhabitants in Paul's day were descendants of the ancient Minoan (c. 2700–1420 BC) and Mycenaean (c. 1420–1375 BC) civilizations, the oldest in Europe. Before the Roman rule of Paul's day, the island was subject to the Greek city–state wars.

The island was agriculturally prosperous, and the southern portion of the island was known for its excellent wines. Relative prosperity, a pagan environment with its idolatry and immorality, and easy island living were reflected among the people, including those in the churches. The Christian religion is unavoidably affected by the society in which it is situated, for better or worse (Tit. 1:9–13; 2:1–10).

The origin of these churches remains unknown. Some Cretians were present at Pentecost (Acts 2:11), and the churches seem to have existed for some time. The main protagonists seem to be Jewish, and, if the churches were of Jewish origin, the threat was real through the background of the members, relatives, and religious opposition (Tit. 1:9–14; 3:9–11). Although Paul spent a short time in Crete on his first journey to Rome as a prisoner, there was no evangelism that we are aware of (Acts 27:7–13).

### Occasion and Purpose

The purpose of writing was three-fold: first, to authorize Titus to supervise in the ordaining of elders (1:5–9), the strengthening of the churches against the false teachers of Judaistic traditions (1:9–16), to urge believers to live godly, consistent lives (2:1–15), to exhort believers to be good citizens (3:1–8) and remain doctrinally pure (3:9–11). Second, to exhort Titus to avoid any and all occasions for self-reproach (2:1, 7–8, 15; 3:9). Third, to inform Titus of his own intention of wintering at Nicopolis (3:12), that he would send Artemas or Tychicus to Crete (3:12), and that Zenas and Apollos were expected to arrive at Crete also (3:13).

### Major Themes

The major themes in this short epistle are: (1) the qualifications for and behavior of a pastor (1:5–9; 2:1, 7–10; 3:1, 9–10). (2) Warnings against false teachers, especially the Jewish

legalists (1:9–16; 32:9–11). (3) Repeated admonitions to maintain good works. “Good works are to follow personal faith.” These are the evidences of salvation.

“Good works” are stated six times in this short letter: 1:16, a negative characteristic of the false teachers. 2:7, Titus as a pattern of good works. 2:14; believers are to be zealous of good works, 3:1; careful to maintain good works, 3:8; learn to maintain good works, 3:14.

Good works are to adorn the gospel. Apart from the warning against false teachers, the letter may be analyzed as:

|                                      |                         |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| The Ministers adorning the Gospel    | (1:5–9)                 |
| The Aged adorning the Gospel         | (2:1–4a)                |
| The Young adorning the Gospel        | (2:4b–6)                |
| Titus adorning the Gospel            | (2:7–8)                 |
| Slaves adorning the Gospel           | (2:9–10)                |
| By living adorning the Gospel        | (2:11–15)               |
| Before the world adorning the Gospel | (3:1–7)                 |
| With good works adorning the Gospel  | (3:8–11) <sup>526</sup> |

### Excursus: The Grace of God

There are several classic passages in this short epistle. The most significant is 2:11–15, a dissertation on the grace of God as epitomizing the redemptive work of our Lord past, present and future, and from the doctrine of the cross to practice in the life and the expectation of our Lord’s return. This is one of the most single significant statements concerning grace in the New Testament.<sup>527</sup>

What is grace? Grace is unmerited [undeserved] favor in the place or stead of merited wrath. Divine grace is a revealed truth. There is both common grace and saving grace.

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<sup>526</sup> Adapted from Merrill F. Unger, *Op. cit.*, pp. 738–742.

<sup>527</sup> Other summary statements include Paul’s “Prison Prayers,” all complex, extended single sentences in the Gk.: Eph. 1:3–14; Eph. 3:14–21; Col. 1:9–20; Phil. 1:9–11. See these prayers in this volume. See also such passages as Jn. 3:16, 1 Tim. 3:16 and Rom. 8:28–39.

### Common Grace

In a creative-cultural context, i.e., with regard to man as fulfilling the Cultural Mandate and, although a sinner, as a creature living in a world created and governed by God, Divine grace is given to fallen humanity. This is termed “common grace,” i.e., Divine grace common to all men apart from salvation. Such grace is necessary for the preservation and maintenance of fallen, sinful mankind, the general restraint of evil and for the fulfillment of the Cultural Mandate to subdue and have dominion over the earth (Psa. 76:10; Prov. 21:1; Isa. 40:21–31; 42:87–9; Dan. 4:35; Eph. 1:9–11; Rev. 4:11).

While common grace preserves and stabilizes mankind in general, within this context, often from unconverted individuals and families, the elect of God are born, grow up, are evangelized, converted, and live out their respective Christian experience in the service of and for the glory of God, and eventually die in hope of the resurrection.

### Saving Grace

Grace may be summarized in the following fashion: first, it is a *principle* of unmerited favor which is extended to men as sinners. Literally everything comes to sinful men—believers and unbelievers—as a matter of grace (Acts 11:23; 15:11; 18:27; Rom. 3:24; 4:16; 11:5–6; 2 Cor. 6:1; Gal. 1:6–7; 1 Tim. 1:14)—man as a sinner deserves nothing but condemnation (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 3:19–20; 5:11–19; Eph. 2:8–10). Salvation from the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:1–23) and eternal damnation (2 Thess. 1:7–9; 2:7–12; Rev. 20:11–15) is all of grace and both are certainties.

Second, it is a *personification*, i.e., grace is mediated through the Lord Jesus Christ alone (Jn. 1:14–7; Rom. 5:15, 17; 1 Cor. 1:3–4, 30–31; Gal. 6:18; Eph. 1:6–7; 2:5, 7; 1 Tim. 1:14; 2 Tim. 1:9; 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:13; Rev. 22:21). He is the very personification of God’s grace (Jn. 1:14–17; 2 Cor. 8:9).

Third, it is a *power* or Divine enablement in the salvation and experience of the believer. Grace enables believers to believe, to persevere, to suffer and to serve (Acts 4:33; 14:3, 26; 20:32; Rom.

1:5; 6:14; 1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; 16:23; 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 1:7, 29; 2 Thess. 1:12; 2:16; Heb. 4:16; 12:28; 2 Pet. 3:18).

Finally, it is a *prerogative*, i.e., Divine grace is both free and sovereign—God grants such grace to whom he will in accordance with His eternal, infallible redemptive purpose (Jn. 6:37, 44; Rom. 8:28–31; Eph. 1:3–14; 2 Thess. 2:13).

“Salvation by grace” means that salvation or deliverance from sin is completely the work of God’s grace and therefore wholly undeserved by the recipient. It means salvation by the wholly unmerited or undeserved favor of God alone. The grace of God which brings salvation is grounded in the Divine, eternal decree or purpose of God. It has an eternal, objective basis in the Divine, eternal, redemptive love and purpose.

“Salvation by grace” is monergistic [the work of one—God alone] in its initiation, and neither humanistic [the work of man, i.e., salvation by works], nor synergistic [the cooperation of God and man], i.e., a mixture of grace and works.

Further, this salvation is through the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus, “who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30–31).

“Salvation is by grace through faith.” “Through faith” [διὰ πίστεως], not “because of faith” [διὰ πίστιν]. This is absolutely definitive; it is the infinite contrast between salvation by grace as opposed to salvation by works [human ability and initiation] (Rom. 11:5–6; Eph. 2:8–9). Faith is instrumental, not causative.<sup>528</sup>

Note: Eph. 2:8–10. <sup>8</sup> For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: <sup>9</sup> Not of works, lest any man should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

One can immediately see that salvation is by grace and sustained by grace, i.e., we are both saved and kept in this state by grace [Τῇ γὰρ χάριτί ἐστε σεσωσμένοι διὰ πίστεως, perphras. perf. ptc.], and it is emphatically not of us or of human

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<sup>528</sup> The prep. διὰ may be used with the gen., “by” or “through,” and with the acc., “because of.” Never in Scripture is salvation “because of faith,” i.e., because of human ability or initiation.



works [καὶ τοῦτο οὐκ ἐξ ὑμῶν, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον· οὐκ ἐξ ἔργων, ἵνα μὴ τις καυχῆσθαι], yet by grace we have been created in Christ Jesus unto good works. God has foreordained this. Grace saves; grace also necessarily produces good works. There is no antinomian grace.

Grace preserves, restrains, humbles, instructs, enables, empowers and sustains believers. Grace conforms them to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29). Grace reigns from election to glorification in our calling, regeneration, conversion, justification, adoption and glorification. It may be stated that the believer exists—lives and dies—in the context of Divine grace.

Note: The New Testament passages which put grace and law into juxtaposition are meant to contrast the principle of salvation by grace with a principle of law—works or a legalistic self-righteousness—a perversion of the purpose of the Law. What is the relation between grace and law? Grace frees us from the reigning power of sin (Rom. 6:14) and from the curse of the Law (Gal. 3:13)—but it does not free us from the Law of God itself. The absence of law is not grace; the absence of the law is lawlessness. This is why grace without Law tends toward antinomianism—and there is no antinomian grace. Grace by its very nature brings us into conformity to God's Law–Word (Rom. 8:3–4). The failure of the Old Covenant was that it was merely external—written on tables of stone. The New Covenant is internal—the Law is written effectually on the heart [inner being], and so effectual by the grace of the Holy Spirit and not merely on tables of stone (Jer. 31:31–34; Ezk. 36:25–27; Rom. 6:14; 8:1–4; 2 Cor. 3:3).<sup>529</sup>

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## Outline

Viewing the church in itself and in its relation to the state can be expressed in a three-fold outline:

- |                          |           |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| The Rule of the Church   | (Chap. 1) |
| The Walk of the Church   | (Chap. 2) |
| The State and the Church | (Chap. 3) |

A five-fold outline with the theme of the local church:

- |                                          |         |
|------------------------------------------|---------|
| Introduction                             | (1:1–4) |
| The Naming of Elders in the Local Church | (1:5–9) |

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<sup>529</sup> See pp. 285–287.

|                                                    |            |
|----------------------------------------------------|------------|
| The Nature of Error in the Local Church            | (1:10–16)  |
| The Need for Excellence in the Local Church        | (2:1–3:11) |
| Conclusion                                         | (3:12–15)  |
| Analysis                                           |            |
| Salutation: The Source of Sound Doctrine           | (1:1–4)    |
| A. The Author                                      | (1:1)      |
| B. The basis of his office                         | (1:2–3)    |
| C. The recipient                                   | (1:4)      |
| I. The Administration of Sound Doctrine:           |            |
| Qualifications of Elders and Necessity of          |            |
| Dealing with False Teachers                        | (1:5–16)   |
| A. Appointment of Elders in Crete                  | (1:5–9)    |
| 1. The duties of Titus                             | (1:5)      |
| 2. Qualifications of elders                        | (1:6–9)    |
| B. Refutation of False Teachers in Crete           | (1:10–16)  |
| 1. Description of these false teachers             | (1:10–13a) |
| 2. Exhortation re these false teachers             | (1:13b–14) |
| 3. Condemnation re these false teachers            | (1:15–16)  |
| II. The Preaching of Sound Doctrine: Regulating    |            |
| Christian Behavior                                 | (2:1–15)   |
| A. Instructions as to Character and Conduct of the |            |
| Church                                             | (2:1–10)   |
| 1. Duty of Titus to instruct church members        | (2:1)      |
| 2. Instructions for aged men                       | (2:2)      |
| 3. Instructions for aged women                     | (2:3)      |
| 4. Instructions for young women                    | (2:4–5)    |
| 5. Instructions for young men                      | (2:6)      |
| 6. The example of Titus                            | (2:7–8)    |
| 7. Exhortation to slaves                           | (2:9–10)   |
| B. The Grace of God the Great Motivating Power for |            |
| the Life                                           | (2:11–14)  |
| 1. The manifestation of God's grace                | (2:11)     |
| 2. The instruction of God's grace                  | (2:12)     |
| 3. The expectation of our Lord's return            | (2:13)     |
| 4. The practical results of our salvation          | (2:14)     |
| C. Titus' Duty Restated                            | (2:15)     |
| III. Counseling through Sound Doctrine: Life and   |            |
| Doctrine                                           | (3:1–11)   |
| A. Obligations of Christians as Citizens           | (3:1–2)    |
| 1. Obligations to authorities                      | (3:1)      |
| 2. Obligations to society                          | (3:2)      |

|                                                 |           |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| B. Motives for such a Godly Life                | (3:3–8)   |
| 1. The contrast of the past life                | (3:3)     |
| 2. The present realities                        | (3:4–7)   |
| C. Reaction to Spiritual Truth and Error        | (3:8–11)  |
| 1. Maintain good works                          | (3:8)     |
| 2. Avoid unreasonable distractions              | (3:9)     |
| 3. Reject repeated heretical offenders          | (3:10)    |
| Concluding Salutations and Continuance in Sound |           |
| Doctrine                                        | (3:12–15) |
| A. Personal matters                             | (3:12–14) |
| B. Final salutation and benediction             | (3:15–16) |

### Notes and Observations

1. (1:2). Paul refers to our God as the truthful [ὁ ἀψευδὴς θεός, unable-to-lie] God. The veracity of God is a great encouragement as we approach him through his Word, which is ever trustworthy.
2. (1:3). The priority and importance of preaching. This is the highest calling and the greatest of gifts. The Lord himself speaks through preaching (Rom. 10:14–15).<sup>530</sup>
3. (1:4). Paul calls Titus his own [spiritual] child, an acknowledgement of his affection and trust. Blessed is that old preacher who has faithful sons in the ministry!
4. (1:5–9). One of the two detailed passages concerning the pastoral ministry (1 Tim. 3:1–7). This is set in the context of conflict and the necessity of absolute faithfulness (1:10–15).
5. (1:15–16). The curse of mere professing Christians. They believe one thing, but practice another.
6. (2:1). The preacher's conversation: speaking things which express healthy teaching [τῇ ὑγιαίνουσῃ διδασκαλίᾳ]. The def. art. emphasizes a distinct body of Divine truth (2 Tim. 1:13).
7. (2:2–6). Commands concerning the various groups within a given church. Each group has its own liabilities and admonitions.

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<sup>530</sup> See p. 260.

8. (2:2–5). Old age has its own issues. Some grow lax in their Christianity. There is no “retirement” for active, godly living.
9. (2:3–5). The place of aged women in the assembly is that of practicality, sanctified activity and being godly examples to the younger women. The term “teach” does not signify a formal teaching position in the church [διδάσκω], but the practical activities of admonishment and encouragement [σωφρονίζουσιν].<sup>531</sup>
10. (2:4–5). The role of women in modern society completely contradicts the Apostle’s instructions. Sadly, at times, the principles of modern, women’s liberation are reflected in the church. Often, husbands have to actively take a stand.
11. (2:6). The Scripture speaks much concerning the sins of youth. Immaturity marks the young. In the context of the church, young men should be brought to godly maturity.

Note: Mark the ten “I’s” of youth:

- *Immaturity* (This is the major division between youth and true adulthood with its fuller experience and intelligence).
- *Ignorance* (Young people simply have not lived long enough to gain knowledge, experience and sufficient wisdom).
- *Impatience* (Although youth rarely values time and yet has so much, and adults are increasingly conscious of it, youth is characterized by a desire for immediacy—They want it all and they want it now. Think about the old proverb: “Youth must be served.”).
- *Indiscretion* (This derives from both immaturity and ignorance).
- *Independence* (How youth want its independence, yet such is rarely tempered with discretion and wisdom).
- *Inexperience* (simple lack of experience results in many mistakes and tragedies).
- *Irresponsibility* (youth tends to be reckless as it learns to be responsible).

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<sup>531</sup> See pp. 177–178, 267, 361.

- *Impudence* (youth often lacks respect for others and institutions. The insolence of youth is a sad reality at times).
  - *Infallibility* (Youth seem to know it all, and often protest when someone older seeks to impart knowledge or give advice).
  - *Invincibility* (Youth may not have reached its extremity yet. Good health, untested strength, lack of life—experiences all tempt young people to think that they can handle or overcome anything).
12. (2:7–8). These exhortations are roughly equal to the qualifications for the pastor, who must be “blameless” (1 Tim. 3:2 [ἀνεπίλημπος], “unable to lay hold of”) (Tit. 1:6 [ἀνέγκλητος], “cannot be called into account” ).
  13. (2:9–10). The New Testament does not directly deal with the institution of slavery. Within the existing system, slaves are to be honest and industrious. Even slaves are to have an honest reputation as believers.
  14. (2:11–15). See the preceding excursus on the grace of God. Believers live in the all-embracing context of Divine grace, which transforms the life, its character and expectation.
  15. (3:1). The Christian and the State. Believers should be the very best of citizens, as this reflects on their religion. The extended statement is found in Rom. 13:1–7. This is an ideal statement and does not deal with the wickedness of human government (1 Tim. 2:1–4). And the state at this very time was killing Christians.
  16. (3:2). Christians must be decent people, not unruly or criminal in their behavior. We must practically live out our testimony and relationship to the gospel.
  17. (3:3–7). Looking back. It is and should be convicting to look back into one’s life and remember what he or she once was. Yet, not linger there, but rehearse the history of God’s grace in our lives. Paul himself did this (1 Tim. 1:13–16).
  18. (3:8). Our testimony before the world consists of our entire life, not simply our verbal conversation. Who will complain about decent, upstanding, honest, people? May our godliness be our only offence!

19. (3:9–11). Contentious debates, even over doctrine and Scripture often prove unprofitable. Beware of those arguments which become a mere waste of time.
20. (3:14). The sixth and final admonition to maintain good works.<sup>532</sup>

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<sup>532</sup> See p. 374–375.

## Philemon

### Introduction

This short,<sup>533</sup> mostly personal letter to Philemon is necessarily included among the “Prison Epistles,”<sup>534</sup> as it was sent from Paul in Rome during his first Roman imprisonment. This letter was placed last in the Pauline canon due to its brevity.

Note: Eleven persons are named in this letter, including several in the church (v. 2–7). This letter was of such a nature that Paul might have intended it to be read before the church, enforcing his plea for Onesimus and his intention for a future visit.

This letter, with the letters to the Ephesians (Eph. 6:21, 24) and Colossians (Col. 4:7, 18), was carried to Asia Minor by Tychicus, accompanied by Onesimus (Col. 4:9; Phlm. 10, 25) and addressed to Philemon, a leader in the church at Colossae (Phlm. 1, 25).

### Authorship and Date

The Pauline authorship has only been doubted twice: first, among some of the fourth century AD because it lacked the usual doctrinal teaching. Second, some radical critics rejected the Pauline authorship for subjective reasons, as they have other Pauline letters. The internal evidence is sufficient (v. 1, 9, 19) and the external evidence is abundant: Ignatius (110), the Muratorian Canon (170), Marcion (c. 140), Tertullian (200), Origen (250) and Eusebius (c. 315). This letter is also in the Old Latin and Old Syriac (150–175).

As Philemon was included with the Epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians, it is dated with them, c. 62.

### Occasion and Purpose

The primary purpose of the letter is three-fold: to encourage Philemon for his faithfulness in the gospel and to the church (v. 1–7), to restore Onesimus, a runaway slave who had absconded with funds or property from Onesimus (v. 8–21), and to inform

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<sup>533</sup> The Gk. text contains 335 words.

<sup>534</sup> See pp. 203–204.

Philemon that Paul intended to visit Colossae upon his release from prison (v. 22). This is the first intimation Paul gave of his anticipated release from imprisonment; the next is in Philippians (1:24–26; 2:19–24), which was probably written some months later.

### Distinctive Features

This short letter has been lauded for its personal appeal, Christian love, concern and compassion: “This Epistle sheweth a right noble, lovely example of Christian love” (Luther). “Though he [Paul] handleth a subject, which otherwise were low and mean, yet, after his manner he is borne up aloft unto God” (Calvin). “A pattern of tact, fine feeling and graciousness” (Holtzmann). “This exquisite and interesting Epistle, alike a masterpiece of persuasive tact and delicacy, and an enduring model of truest Christian courtesy” (Ellicott). “In every line and syllable this note betrays Paul’s personality. Nothing more genuine was ever written” (Findlay).

There are several items of consideration in this letter: first, its form is that common to such letters of the first century. Paul avows his prayers and intercessions for Philemon, acknowledges his preeminence among the believers at Colossae, appeals to his Christian love to an aged Apostle and dear friend, pleads for Onesimus, reveals his usefulness, but acknowledges that he belongs to Philemon, then uses sanctified humor, and finally reminds Philemon of his own indebtedness to Paul spiritually. He then closes the plea with the confidence that Philemon would do more than Paul asked.

This letter reveals much of the personality and character of the aged Apostle, and is valuable for this reason alone. His sanctified humor and wit reveal a Christian living in the conscious content of Divine providence, with a command of his surroundings—although a prisoner of Jesus Christ—and at peace with himself as he pleads for the restoration of a dear friend and convert to another dear friend and convert.<sup>535</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Contrast this portrayal with that of F. W. Farrar, See p. 35.



Second, note the mention of “bowels” (v. 7, 12, 20). Philemon lived in Asia Minor, and in Eastern thought the term referred to the “nobler viscera,” i.e., the heart, lungs, kidneys, not to the lower intestine, as in Western thought. To the people of that day, the bowels were the center and source of the life and emotions. Westerners would use the term “heart,” as some modern biblical versions interpret the word.

Third, Paul refers to himself as “the aged” (v. 9). Life expectancy at that time was very short, 20–30 years.<sup>536</sup> He pled his age and this would introduce the cause of Onesimus, who had been his helper for a time since the latter’s conversion. Paul could have kept him, but although he was converted and repentant, restitution must be maintained according to law.

Paul’s play-on-words reveal his playful wit. Onesimus [Ὀνήσιμος] means “profitable.” He was once unprofitable to Philemon, but has been profitable to Paul and would be profitable to Philemon upon his return. Further, as Onesimus was now converted and had proven himself, Paul urges Philemon to receive him as more than a slave—a fellow-believer. If there financial considerations from his theft, it would be placed on Paul’s account, though Philemon owed Paul his very own life spiritually.

Note: There is no record of the conversion of Philemon. As Paul had not yet personally visited the Lycus Valley region (Col. 2:1), it is probable that Philemon and his wife had traveled to Ephesus and come under Paul’s evangelistic influence there and been converted. Thus began an enduring friendship.

Fourth, Onesimus was accompanied by Tychicus for a good reason. Slave catchers or bounty hunters abounded in the empire where more than a third of the population were slaves.<sup>537</sup> A runaway slave could be branded or even killed once captured. One who was a thief could expect no mercy. Onesimus was technically in the custody of Tychicus on this journey for his own protection.

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<sup>536</sup> See footnote, p. 174.

<sup>537</sup> It has been estimated that there were some 60 million slaves in the Roman Empire at that time.

Finally, Paul reveals his anticipated release and intention of traveling to Colossae, and desires to stay with Philemon (v. 22).

### Onesimus, Christianity and Slavery

This letter from Paul is not a position paper on slavery. Anachronistically, many read into this plea for Onesimus the abolition of slavery. The institution of slavery<sup>538</sup> was practiced among all the peoples of the ancient cultures, including the Jews in the Old and New Testaments, and Christians in the New Testament Era. The idea of the abolition of slavery belongs to the modern world, not the ancient.

In his letters, Paul urged Christian masters to treat their slaves well and for slaves to be honest and hardworking (e.g., Eph. 6:5–6; Col. 3:22; 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1; Tit. 2:9). He also refers to Christians as spiritual bondslaves to our Lord (Rom. 1:1; 6:16–18, 20, 22; 1 Cor. 7:23; 2 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 6:6; Phil. 1:1). The Apostle Peter and others do the same (Jas. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 1:1; Rev. 1:1).

Note: There are seven terms for “servant” in Gk., thus some confusion may exist in the English versions, as the one Eng. term may denote several classes of persons: δοῦλος, a bondslave. This is the most common term, and describes abject slavery, “one whose will is swallowed up in the will of his master,” used both literally and spiritually; δίακονος, “deacon,” one who waits on another; παῖς, “child,” “servant,” an attendant; οἰκέτης, a household servant [fr. οἶκος, “house”]; ὑπηρέτης, a subordinate; θεραπεύων, to serve, heal, attend to [Eng. “therapy”]; σύνδουλος, a fellow-servant, fr. δοῦλος, a bondslave.

Onesimus, a native Phrygian (Col. 4:9), and therefore the lowest of slaves,<sup>539</sup> had run away from Philemon and absconded with money or valuables. He evidently fled to Rome, the

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<sup>538</sup> The term “servant” in the New Testament is often the interpretation of the term δοῦλος, a slave. See p. 351 for this term as descriptive of believers and the writers of the New Testament: “Bondslaves of Jesus Christ.”

<sup>539</sup> Most slaves were imported or taken from the ranks of conquered peoples. Onesimus had evidently done something criminal which caused him to be sold into slavery to one of his own people.

empire's greatest city, to remain lost in the vast population. There in the providence of God he was converted under Paul's ministry. He remained in Rome as Paul's helper for some time, but although he was repentant, restitution had to be made under the existing Roman law. Paul returned Onesimus to his master, pleading with Philemon to receive him as a fellow-believer. Paul himself, if necessary, would make the restitution for Onesimus' theft.

Paul did not claim "a higher moral law" which enabled him to be unlawful or lawless. He did not rebuke Philemon for holding slaves. It is dangerous for Christianity and politics to amalgamate into a distorted, self-proclaimed, false morality and self-righteousness which may be used to flaunt human legislation. When religion and the State are merged, it is an unholy union and the gospel is lost. The church is to remain separate from the world. The true power of Christianity is spiritual, not political or legal. Any moral and ethical influences derive from the effects of the gospel.

### Outline

This short, personal letter may be conveniently divided into a three-fold outline:

|              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| Commendation | (v.1-7)  |
| Intercession | (v.8-21) |
| Revelation   | (v. 22)  |

Or,

|                                |            |
|--------------------------------|------------|
| Salutation                     | (v. 1-3)   |
| Paul's Praise of Philemon      | (v. 4-7)   |
| Paul's Plea for Onesimus       | (v. 8-17)  |
| Paul's Pledge and Anticipation | (v. 18-22) |
| Conclusion                     | (v. 23-25) |

### Analysis

|                                   |          |
|-----------------------------------|----------|
| Introduction and Salutation       | (v. 1-3) |
| A. The Writer                     | (v.1)    |
| B. The Readers                    | (v. 2)   |
| C. The Greeting                   | (v. 3)   |
| I. The Praise of Philemon         | (v. 4-7) |
| A. The Nature of the Thanksgiving | (v. 4)   |
| B. The Cause for Thanksgiving     | (v. 5-6) |

|                               |            |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| C. The Basis for Thanksgiving | (v. 7)     |
| II. The Plea for Onesimus     | (v. 8–17)  |
| A. The Basis of the Appeal    | (v. 8–9)   |
| B. The Object of the Appeal   | (v. 10–14) |
| C. Providence and the Appeal  | (v. 15–16) |
| D. The Nature of the Appeal   | (v. 17)    |
| III. The Pledge of Paul       | (v. 18–22) |
| A. The Promise of Paul        | (v. 18–19) |
| B. The Confidence of Paul     | (v. 20–21) |
| C. The Anticipation of Paul   | (v. 22)    |
| Conclusion and Benediction    | (v. 23–25) |
| A. Greetings from Friends     | (v. 23–24) |
| B. Personal benediction       | (v. 25)    |

### Notes and Observations

1. (v. 1). Paul describes himself, not as a prisoner of Nero or Rome, but of the Lord Jesus Christ. He acknowledged our Lord's sovereignty over all and every human circumstance and condition.
2. (v. 1). Philemon is addressed as Paul's fellow-laborer, a term of great respect with practical implications. A believer does not have to be a pastor to be greatly used in God's work. Godly helpers are blessed encouragements in the work.
3. (v. 2). Apphia may be Philemon's wife. Archippus was a pastor, probably the one who replaced Epaphras at Colossae.<sup>540</sup> The reference to the church which met in Philemon's house: church buildings were not known or common until the end of the second century and beginning of the third. Early Christian assemblies met in homes.
4. (v. 3–4). Paul's customary greeting. Such Christian salutations were not simply matters of decency, but always heartfelt and backed by prayer and intercession.
5. (v. 5–7). A godly reputation must always be a practical one, in addition to a doctrinal one. Doctrine without practice is necessarily not only incomplete, but tends to be warped.
6. (v. 9). Paul the aged prisoner. He plays upon his age and condition, but not unfairly. Such were true and were realities.

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<sup>540</sup> See p. 328.

We can argue spiritual and physical realities if these do not become excuses in the work of the gospel or for undue sympathy.

7. (v. 10–21). Paul uses tact, kindness and sanctified humor, and argues the realities of Onesimus' conversion and usefulness to convince Philemon to receive him back as a brother in Christ. Paul's play-on-words has been previously discussed. Christians can be restored and reconciled by grace and truth. With the world this is all but impossible, but it is gloriously possible and to be encouraged among God's people.
8. (v. 12). Paul refers to Onesimus as his "own heart." There is no true parallel in human love, affection and relationship as there is and should be among believers.
9. (v. 18–19). Although there is little direct doctrinal teaching in this letter, the principles of imputation, of love, forgiveness and reconciliation are pronounced realities in the case of Onesimus.
10. (v. 22). Paul's first imprisonment was as a Roman citizen falsely accused of religious sectarianism, and so not subject to Roman law. No accusers from Judea had traveled to Rome for his trial.<sup>541</sup> He was confident of acquittal.
11. (v. 23–25). Paul's companions are noted. God providentially provided him with blessed helpers throughout his times of need. Note that Epaphras was imprisoned with Paul. At some time others were also evidently imprisoned with him (e.g., Timothy, Heb. 13:23). Sadly, Demas later apostatized; others were sent on various missions (2 Tim. 4:9–12).

### A Closing Note: Hebrews

It is the conviction of the author that the Apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews. However, as Hebrews is listed with the General Epistles, i.e., to Christians at large rather than a given church or individual and, as this present volume has reached its capacity, the Epistle to the Hebrews will be studied in the next and last projected volume of this series: *The General Epistle and Revelation*.

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<sup>541</sup> See pp. 204–205.



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