

CHAPTER 9

THE SOTERIOLOGICAL EPISTLES

(Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans)

These four great epistles of Paul provide the center of his theology and influence. They were produced fairly closely together, during his third missionary journey (with the possible exception of Galatians). Since they emphasize the doctrines of salvation—election, regeneration, justification, sanctification—they have been called the Soteriological Epistles. The Greek word *soteria* means “salvation.” All critics recognize these epistles as Pauline; so we will not have to discuss the authorship of each one individually.

Galatians

The Judaizers

The reason for this epistle is clear from its contents. The Judaizers were Jewish Christians who taught that Gentile believers must be circumcised and obey the laws of Moses in order to be included in the church. It seems that they traveled around and sought to stir up the churches Paul had established or ministered in. Their appearance in Antioch is noted in Acts 15:1. They basically said that works were required for salvation (Gal 1:6; 5:2-4). Since Paul always taught that salvation was totally by grace through faith alone, these false teachers would seek to discredit him in the eyes of the churches. They said that the original apostles had more authority than Paul, and that he had misunderstood or was contradicting their doctrines. Naturally, their confident teaching disturbed and confused the Gentile believers in the churches. Galatians is Paul’s strongest polemic against the Judaizers.

The Galatians

About 250 B.C. Gauls from Europe moved into north central Asia Minor, and in 25 B.C. King Amyntas willed this territory to the Romans. The Romans expanded the province during the next 100 years. Thus the term “Galatia” can refer to either the ethnic area, or to the Roman

province. Paul seems to have been there at least twice before (cf. Gal 4:13, “As you know, it was because of an illness that I first preached the gospel to you”).

The identity of the Galatians is therefore a disputed point. They could have been the nationality of the Gauls living in Asia Minor (North Galatian theory); or those who lived in the Roman province of Galatia, but who were not Gauls by race (South Galatian theory).

North Galatian theory

Joseph Barber Lightfoot, *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (1865; d. 1889)

Reasons given:

- Visited northern Galatia on second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23; two previous visits required by Gal 4:13)
- Galatia and Phrygia, mentioned in Acts, are taken as separate areas; cities in Galatia would include Pessinus, Ancyra, Tavium
- Use of “disciples” instead of “churches” in Acts 18:23 strengthens the argument (but note “churches” in Gal 1:2)

“After spending some time in Antioch, Paul set out from there and traveled from place to place throughout the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.” (Acts 18:23)

- The use of the province name Galatia in Gal 3:1 would offend the people there (Lightfoot admits provincial names used in Gal 1:2; 1 Cor 16:1; 2 Tim 4:10)
- Lightfoot also believed that the temperament of the Gauls was more prone to instability, making them the likely group to be led away by the Judaizers.

(The North Galatian view was the commonly accepted one until the archaeological work of William Ramsay demonstrated that the Roman province of Galatia included the southern portion in the time of Paul.)

South Galatian theory

William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul, The Traveler and the Roman Citizen* (1897), *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians* (1899)

Reasons given:

- Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16:6; 18:23) taken to mean “Phrygian Galatia,” i.e., that part of the Roman province of Galatia that is in the region of Phrygia
- Cities written to in Galatians would be those of first missionary journey: Antioch-Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe
- Those cities visited on all three missionary journeys (Acts 13:14 - 14:24; 16:6; 18:23)
- This location would make Luke’s emphasis in Acts coincide with Paul’s in Galatians (giving helpful background to the epistle)
- Judaizers probably would go to the cities of southern Galatia before traveling to the distant cities in the north
- Paul (and Luke) often use Roman civic or provincial names, rather than national regions (Acts 2:10; 16:6-9; 19:29; 20:4; 1 Cor 16:5; 2 Cor 6:11; 9:2, 4; Rom 15:19, 26; 16:5; Titus 1:5, 12; 2 Tim 4:10); why not in Gal 3:1?

In general, modern scholars tend to prefer the South Galatian view, but the issue is not conclusively decided. Many modern NT scholars deny the historicity of Acts, and their conclusions are thereby affected.

Date of Galatians

The date of Galatians is one of the most controversial subjects in the life of Paul. Among other things, the issue of the events in Galatians 2 and their relation to the book of Acts is tied to this question. Some would even judge the historicity of Acts according to its relation to Galatians. The chronology of Paul’s life is also involved, since Galatians gives two important time statements, involving periods of three and fourteen years (Gal. 1:18; 2:1). A good summary of the various positions can be found in J. Gresham Machen, “The Triumph of Gentile Freedom,” *The Origin of Paul’s Religion* (1925), pp. 71-113.

Early date

—After first missionary journey, before the Jerusalem Council, written from Antioch, A.D. 48-49

This view is adopted by F. F. Bruce, and is worked into his construction of Paul’s life in his *New Testament History* (1971) and *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (1977). It has been accepted by many conservative scholars.

- Previous two visits implied by Gal 4:13 are said to be either the first missionary journey and a conjectural trip later, or the first missionary journey itself, counting the return trip as the second visit (Acts 14:21)
- This earliest date therefore possible only if South Galatian view is accepted
- Two visits to Jerusalem mentioned (Gal 1:18; 2:1) are Paul's first visit there and then the famine visit (Acts 9:26; 11:30)

Reasons given:

- Difficulty of harmonizing Gal 2 with Acts 15 is solved; they were different visits
- Paul solemnly lists visits to Jerusalem in Gal 1-2; seems unlikely he would omit the second visit (famine visit)
- Galatians does not mention the Jerusalem Council decision; seems that Paul could easily have settled the issue bothering the Galatians by referring to the Jerusalem decision, if it had already taken place
- The subsequent actions of Peter (Gal 2:11-21) fit well with the time before the Council, rather than after it

Middle date

—After the Jerusalem Council, during Paul's second missionary journey, written from Corinth, A.D. 50

This view is held by many scholars. It seeks to ease the chronological tightness of the earliest date, and identify the meeting in Gal 2 with the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15. The middle date could include a broader range of time (perhaps written from Antioch after the Council, or written during Paul's travels on his second missionary journey, or after his return to Antioch).

- The two visits to Galatia are the first missionary journey and the second missionary journey
- Therefore, this view still requires the South Galatian destination of the epistle
- The two visits to Jerusalem mentioned in Galatians are the first visit after Paul's conversion, and the Jerusalem Council; the famine visit is not mentioned in Galatians

Reasons given:

- The 14 or 17 years after Paul's conversion (Gal 1:18; 2:1) fit better for the Jerusalem Council than for the famine visit
- Two visits being the first two journeys seems more natural
- The famine visit was not relevant to this discussion (no doctrine discussed)
- Gal 2 seems to fit better with the Jerusalem Council than with the famine visit: names of participants, issue involved
- Other arguments favoring earliest date can be answered (see notes on Apostolic Council)

Late date

—During Paul's third missionary journey, from Ephesus (A.D. 51-53), or during his trip through Macedonia (A.D. 53), or from Corinth (A.D. 53-54)

This is the traditional date for Galatians. The North Galatian view requires this date, and the South Galatian view allows it. The contents of the epistle link it to the other Soteriological epistles, which were written during this time. J. B. Lightfoot's commentary on Galatians argues forcibly for this view.

Lightfoot dates the epistle as written on Paul's journey from Macedonia toward Corinth (p. 55). Machen favors a date a little earlier, during Paul's ministry in Ephesus (*The New Testament, An Introduction to its Literature and History*, p. 123; *Machen's Notes on Galatians*, ed. by John H. Skilton, pp. 23-26).

- Prior visits to Galatia would be the three missionary journeys (South Galatian view), or the second and third missionary journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23; North Galatian view)
- This the only possible date for the North Galatian view; thus is the traditional date
- Two visits to Jerusalem mentioned would be first visit and Jerusalem Council (same as for middle date)

Reasons given:

- Pauline chronology OK, same as for middle date view

- Doctrinal similarity to other Soteriological epistles, all written on third missionary journey
- Especially similar to Romans, written from Corinth, winter of A.D. 53-54; see table in Lightfoot's commentary, pp. 45-48

As can be seen, the question of the date of Galatians is complicated, and a positive, dogmatic answer is out of the question. There are strong arguments favoring each position. For purposes of course organization, we will follow the traditional date of Galatians (as Goodwin does), realizing that the other constructions offer plausible outlines of Paul's life and ministry. Fortunately, the teaching of the epistle is not changed, regardless of which date it was written. Its message is important and timeless.

Unique features of Galatians

- No beginning commendation
- Strong against heresy, 1:8-9; 5:12
- Second most autobiographical epistle (after 2 Corinthians)
- Paul's argument with Peter, 2:11-21
- Paul's eye trouble, 4:15; 6:11 (cf. 2 Cor. 12:7; phps. Acts 23:5)
- Wrote ending himself (with large letters), 6:11-18
- Paul's *stigmata*, "marks" of persecution, 6:17

Outline of Galatians

I. Paul's independent apostleship, ch. 1-2

Paul begins by asserting his authority as an apostle. It comes from God directly, not through any men, even the other apostles.

1. Salutation, 1:1-5
2. Danger of heresy, 1:6-10

Some of Paul's strongest words are against those who preach "another" (ἕτερος *heteros*, another kind) gospel, which is not "another" (ἄλλος *allos*, another of the same kind). The false preacher is "anathema," considered to be eternally condemned.

The rest of ch. 1-2 is given over to showing that Paul received his gospel directly from God. His limited contacts with the apostles show this to be true.

3. Paul's conversion and first Jerusalem visit, 1:11-24

Paul's conversion was not the work of man, but of God himself (vv. 11-16a). Paul did not confer with any other apostles until three years later, but rather stayed in Arabia and Damascus. Then he made his brief visit of only 15 days in Jerusalem, and saw only Peter and James. He then tells how he returned to the region of his native Tarsus to preach for many years.

4. Paul's visit to Jerusalem 14 years later, 2:1-10

This is either the famine visit or the Jerusalem Council visit (see arguments above and in Paul notes). At this time, rather than learning the doctrine from the apostles, Paul stood up and defended his gospel, and was accepted by all the apostles as equal in office to themselves.

Paul refused to allow Titus, who was with him, to be circumcised; thus he opposed the Judaizers. This event is not recorded in Acts.

5. Paul's dissent with Peter, 2:11-21

To conclusively prove his point, Paul recalls how he opposed Peter's conduct openly in Antioch. In the same passage he demonstrates the actual doctrinal unity that he and Peter shared.

II. Justification by faith alone, ch. 3 - 5:12

Having established his independent apostleship, Paul now enters into the subject at hand: how is one saved and how does one please God? Is it by keeping the Jewish external law? Paul responds with a strong argument for justification by faith alone.

1. The question introduced, 3:1-5

The Galatians should know by their own experience that the gift of the Holy Spirit is associated with faith, not works.

2. The promise and example of Abraham, 3:6-29

Paul shows that Abraham was saved by faith, not by his circumcision, or other works (vv. 6-9, quoting Gen. 15:6). The promise to Abraham is given to all who believe the gospel, even those not his descendants by race (v. 29). In the church there is no human distinction (v. 28).

3. The Christian now a son of God, not a slave to the law, 4:1-20

Paul is concerned that the Galatians will forsake their good beginning and turn to the “weak and miserable principles” of the external law as their means of acceptance with God. He mentions their love for him, and his great concern for them.

4. Illustration of Hagar and Sarah, 4:21-31

Abraham’s method of operation in trying to achieve God’s promise corresponds to that of the Galatians. He tried the way of the flesh: Hagar; then he rested and trusted in God, and the promised son came through Sarah. This is a “figure” to show how God’s promised salvation comes: not through human effort, but by simple faith in God’s fulfilling of his promise.

5. Christian freedom, 5:1-12

Paul warns against the Judaizers, who try to lord it over the lives of the Galatians. If we trust in Christ, then men cannot have this power over us (vv. 2-4). Paul strongly condemns these false teachers (v. 12).

III. Practical exhortations, 5:13 - 6:10

1. True spiritual life, 5:13-26

Contrast between the “flesh” (sinful nature) and the “Spirit”; the Christian will live in true freedom, led by the Spirit in all moral action and thought.

2. Brotherly love, 6:1-10

We should all be a blessing to each other, and help each other.

IV. Paul’s concluding testimony, 6:11-18

Written in large letters (v. 11). Notice his calling the church “the Israel of God” (v. 16); this verse is quite controversial, with dispensationalists believing that it refers to national Israel only.

Summarizes the main ideas of the epistle, and closes with a benediction.

1 Corinthians

The Corinthian church

Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. Located on the isthmus it was a strategic city on the shipping route between Rome and Asia. The city was known for its immorality and vice; its temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, was located on a hill there, with thousands of prostitutes living on the premises.

Paul founded the church on his second missionary journey (Acts 18). He stayed there one and a half years, and formed a church of Jews and Gentiles separated from the Jewish synagogue and the pagan temples. After Paul returned to Antioch, Apollos came and preached in Corinth (Acts 19:1). However, Apollos was not preaching there when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians (cf. 1 Cor 16:12). The immoral surroundings and mixed background of the church gave it ample opportunity to develop problems; many of these are addressed in 1 Corinthians.

Paul's later contacts

On Paul's third missionary journey, while ministering across the Aegean Sea in Ephesus, he heard of the problems of immorality in Corinth, and sent them a letter not to keep company with immoral people (1 Cor 5:9). This letter is not now extant.

It appears that Paul even traveled there one time himself, during his time of ministry in Ephesus (2 Cor 12:14; 13:2). While again in Ephesus, Paul received reports about the church from the household of Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), and received a delegation from the church (Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus; 1 Cor 16:17-18). What he heard about the church greatly disturbed him; there were serious problems there.

Plan for a third visit

Paul decided to visit the church a third time, to put matters right (1 Cor 4:18-21). In addition, Paul was planning to bring a collection from the Gentile churches to the saints in Jerusalem, and he would have to come to Corinth to collect their part of the offering (1 Cor 16:1-4). Paul wanted the Corinthians to be ready to receive him, to put him up for the winter, and to assist him on the next leg of his journey (1 Cor 16:5-7).

Purpose of 1 Corinthians

Before his intended third visit, Paul sent this letter to the church by Timothy, who would teach and encourage the church, and report back to Paul (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10). Paul wanted these

problems to be dealt with before he himself would arrive, so that he could have a happy visit. Apparently Timothy was sent by way of Macedonia (Acts 19:22). The particular church problems which Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians are these:

- 1) Schism in the church (ch. 1-4)
- 2) Lack of discipline for immorality (ch. 5)
- 3) Believers going to law (ch. 6)
- 4) Sexual immorality (ch. 6)
- 5) Disorderly church worship, especially with the Lord's Supper (ch. 11)
- 6) False teachings regarding the resurrection (ch. 15)

Also, the church had several questions which they had written to Paul (1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1). This letter was intended to answer these questions as well. The questions concerned these subjects:

- 1) Proper use of marriage, divorce, celibacy (ch. 7)
- 2) Differences of conscience, especially regarding food offered to idols (ch. 8-10)
- 3) Use of spiritual gifts in church (ch. 12-14)

Paul answers their questions, and uses the opportunity to rebuke them for their violations and to encourage them to advance in their Christian lives.

Outline of 1 Corinthians

I. Commendation for their faith, 1:1-9

The church had been active for Christ, witnessing and growing, seeking spiritual gifts.

II. Four major problems, 1:10 - ch. 6

Paul begins the body of the letter by immediately confronting them with their major faults, which threaten their life and testimony.

1. Divisions in the church, 1:10 - ch. 4

The members were dividing into groups, claiming to follow Peter, Paul, Apollos, or Christ.

This division revealed a pride of supposed wisdom; Paul shows that in Christ we forsake worldly wisdom and worldly power, and find the wisdom and power of God. This wisdom comes from the Holy Spirit, who indwells all believers and makes them one.

These groups proved that they were still “worldly” (3:1). God is the one who will judge the human leaders of the church. Paul uses sarcasm to show how the Corinthians thought more of themselves than the apostles dared for themselves (4:8-13).

Paul is sending Timothy and is himself coming to put down this party spirit.

2. Lack of discipline for open immorality, ch. 5

The man who is living in incest must be put out of the church. Now the church seems to be proud of him. It is possible that this is the same man who is reported to have repented in 2 Cor 2:5-11.

3. Believers going to law, 6:1-11

Instead of allowing themselves to be cheated by unscrupulous professing Christians, or to take the matter to the church court (session), they were going to the secular authorities, who thereby were receiving a bad impression about the Christian faith. Paul urges them to settle these matters in the church.

4. Sexual immorality, 6:12-20

Apparently some of the church members were still consorting with the prostitutes of Corinth. Paul strongly forbids such immorality, finding it the opposite of true union with Christ.

III. Questions related to marriage, ch. 7

Paul explains that it is better to remain single if possible, but that marriage is honorable. If married, the spouse is to fulfill all the marital obligations, and not to separate from his or her spouse. On the other hand, if the unbelieving spouse seeks a divorce, the Christian is not to prevent it; the Christian is free to remarry in the Lord.

Christians are to serve Christ in the estate in which they are found: married, slave, or whatever.

The concluding section about “acting improperly toward his own virgin” is difficult to interpret. It may refer to fathers giving their daughters in marriage, or to potential husbands regarding their betrothed wives.

IV. Questions related to food offered to idols, ch. 8-10

1. Food offered to idols, ch. 8

Such food is the same as before, but the weak Christian may not realize this. Therefore, the strong Christian must behave so as not to hurt the weak, even if it means circumscribing his own liberty.

2. Paul’s example regarding liberty, ch. 9

Paul himself has many rights as an apostle. But he does not exercise these rights at all times, because he can help more people and further his ministry by limiting his activities so as not to cause needless offense.

This self-sacrificial attitude is similar to that of an athlete’s difficult training and great exertion to win a race.

3. Israel’s example of self-indulgence, 10:1-13

By not disciplining itself Israel was judged by God in the wilderness. God will give the strength necessary to stand all the trials and temptations a consistent Christian life will demand.

4. What is expected of Christians, 10:14-33

Christians are to remain separate from idol worship of any kind. In addition, they are to live a life of example and love for all their brothers.

V. Orderly worship of God, ch. 11

The Corinthians were to maintain social propriety in worship, with the women not being the leaders or keeping their heads uncovered.

In celebrating the Lord’s Supper the people were being disorderly. This was a reproach and brought chastisement upon them. The service must be charitable and orderly. This is perhaps the earliest written account of the Lord’s Supper in the New Testament.

VI. Question of spiritual gifts, ch. 12-14

1. Identity and purpose of spiritual gifts, ch. 12

Early in the church history God gave the churches people with various gifts (vv. 8-10). These were intended to strengthen the body and give it unity. No one gift (especially tongues) was to be exalted above the others. Nor was any individual to receive each gift, and no gift was to be possessed by all Christians (vv. 29-30).

2. The best gift: love, ch. 13

This eloquent and famous chapter extols love as the greatest gift from God. And all Christians can have it, and should seek it. It will unify the church as no other gift can.

3. Spiritual gifts and church worship, ch. 14

Paul explains how prophecy is a superior gift to tongues. He describes how these gifts are to be used in the church service, and the limitations to be placed upon them. The service is to be intelligible and orderly, not a prideful demonstration of spiritual prowess.

VII. The physical resurrection, ch. 15

Some had denied the doctrine of the future resurrection. Paul shows how the Christian must accept this doctrine. If there is no resurrection, then Christ was not raised (a possibility which no Christian can accept). In that case, we would be without salvation. On the other hand, Christ's resurrection guarantees our own resurrection.

He describes the resurrection, and the type of bodies we will have in the age to come. The chapter concludes with a glorious and eloquent praise to God for the promise of the resurrection.

VIII. Personal matters, ch. 16

Paul mentions the collection he is making for the saints in Jerusalem, and explains his plans for his coming visit to Corinth. He tells how he is sending this letter, and mentions the activities of several of his friends and coworkers. The book concludes with Paul's personal greeting and benediction.

2 Corinthians

Background

Paul had written 1 Corinthians from Ephesus and had sent Timothy to visit the church (1 Cor 4:17). Paul was not sure that the letter had produced a good reaction; perhaps Timothy had a negative report. Paul had already paid a quick visit to Corinth from Ephesus (cf. 2 Cor 12:14; 13:1-2). Even so, he was concerned.

Paul therefore sent Titus to Corinth, to encourage them and to bring back word about their spiritual condition. Paul was so concerned to hear from Titus that he left Ephesus for Troas, and then for Macedonia, where he finally met him. Titus' good report filled Paul with relief and joy (2 Cor 7:6-7, 13-15; 8:6).

In order to facilitate his pending third visit and to expedite the collection, Paul sent Titus and two other brothers back to Corinth ahead of Paul; they were given 2 Corinthians to carry with them (2 Cor 8:16-24).

Special points of interest

- Probably the most autobiographical and emotional of Paul's epistles
- Good results of church discipline (2:1-11)
- Great separation passage (6:14 - 7:1)
- Great passage on Christian giving (ch. 8-9)
- Catalog of Paul's sufferings (up to that point on the third missionary journey, 11:23-33; cf. 6:3-10)
- Paul caught up to heaven, and his thorn in the flesh (12:7-10)

Outline of 2 Corinthians

I. Introduction, God's comfort, 1:1-11

Paul is bubbling over with joy and enthusiasm as he writes to the Corinthians. God has brought him through deep waters of trial and anxiety, to a large extent because of the problems in Corinth. Now God is comforting him by the good

news he has heard from Titus. God gives us trials and hardships so that we can comfort others, just as God comforts us.

II. Paul's delayed visit to Corinth, 1:12 - 2:4

Earlier Paul had planned to go from Ephesus directly to Corinth, then to Macedonia, then back to Corinth. Instead, Paul decided to omit that first visit and go to Macedonia first, to meet Titus. He did this not because he was unstable, but so that they might have time to repent of their wrongs and be prepared for his visit.

Paul mentions the "letter of many tears" that he had written to them (2:4). This may be 1 Corinthians, or it may be another, lost, epistle. It does fit with the contents of 1 Corinthians.

III. Forgiveness for the offender, 2:5-11

Paul urges the church to forgive and receive back in fellowship the man who has been disciplined for sin and who has repented. They should be careful lest he sorrow unto despair (cf. 7:8-10). Possibly this is the same man who was to be cast out of the church in 1 Corinthians 5.

IV. "The glory of the ministry," 2:12 – ch. 7

This heading is taken from the book of the same title by A. T. Robertson, which is an exposition of this section of 2 Corinthians. Robertson's book is an excellent encouragement for ministers who may be discouraged in their calling.

1. Paul as a minister of the new covenant, 2:12 - ch. 3

Paul's anxiety as he sought Titus in Troas and Macedonia might appear to be a sign of weakness (2:12-13). But actually his progress through these regions was God's "triumphal procession." The gospel always accomplishes God's purposes (2:14-17).

Paul's proof of God's blessing is the hearts of the Corinthian believers, written on by the Spirit of God, the promise of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31 (3:1-6). This new covenant is more glorious than that of Moses, and the greater glory is reflected in the lives of the Christians (3:7-18).

2. Paul as a vessel of clay, ch. 4

Even though Paul has this great calling, he is only a mortal, redeemed sinner. He is weak against the forces of evil and persecution. Yet the strength of the Holy Spirit sustains him and his ministry. He looks forward to his heavenly reward, which far outweighs his sufferings (v. 17).

3. Resurrection glory, 5:1-10

Our present suffering for Christ, especially in ministry, will be followed by our spiritual presence with him after death. Even better, we will have our heavenly body given us at the resurrection. The Holy Spirit we now have is a deposit, guaranteeing that inheritance. We must labor with eternity in view, especially the great *bema*, the judgment seat of Christ.

4. Paul's glorious gospel, 5:11 - 6:2

The theme Paul is to proclaim is reconciliation between God and man; people need to be reconciled to God. There is no higher calling than to preach that message.

5. Paul's dedication to his office, 6:3-13

No troubles or persecutions can stop Paul in his glorious work as a minister of the new covenant. He has endured all hardships. He shares his heart openly with the Corinthians (vv. 11-13).

6. Warning for separation, 6:14 - 7:1

If the Corinthians are to share in the blessings of the new covenant, they must be loyal to the Lord. They must avoid compromise with paganism and with unbelieving Judaism. If they remain a separate people, the Lord will give them the covenant promises and fellowship (6:18; 7:1).

7. Paul's joy in seeing God's blessing on his work, 7:2-16

Paul here details how he was so concerned for the Corinthians, how he sent Titus, and how God comforted him by their good report.

V. Preparation for the collection, ch. 8-9

In these two chapters Paul explains how the Macedonians have given so generously to this offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem, and how he is expecting the Corinthians to give generously too (8:1-12). Christian charity should be reciprocal (8:13-15).

Paul tells of his plan to send Titus and two others to collect this money in advance (8:16-24). He emphasizes that he is taking along representatives of the churches, so that everyone will know where the money is going; we must be honest before men as well as before God (v. 21).

In a friendly spirit, Paul encourages the Corinthians by telling how he has boasted about them (9:1-5). He then reminds them how God will bless a cheerful giver (“hilarious,” v. 7), by supplying in turn his needs, and by causing his gift to bring thanksgiving to God (9:6-15). He closes with the memorable verse, “Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!”

VI. Paul’s defense of his ministry, ch. 10-12

Even though the church now is favorably disposed to him, Paul realizes there are many attacks against him and his work. Here he defends himself in order to confirm their loyalty to him and to his gospel.

1. The strength of Paul’s ministry, ch. 10

Paul desires that his ministry will obey and glorify Christ, not himself. He recognizes that many criticize him, especially his physical presence (v. 10). Yet he will not boast about his work, nor even evaluate it, certainly not compare it with that of others. Paul does say that his strength lies in his pioneer work, not relying on that done by others (v. 16).

2. Comparison with false apostles, 11:1-15

The false apostles, called here “super apostles” (v. 5; cf. v. 13; 12:11), sought their own glory and wealth, not Christ’s glory or the welfare of the church. Paul, on the other hand, worked to support himself, even “robbing” other churches by receiving gifts from Macedonia (v. 8).

3. Paul’s sufferings, 11:16-33

Here Paul defends his ministry by showing how he has not sought glory, but has consistently suffered for the truth. This list of sufferings shows how incomplete the book of Acts is; most of these persecutions are not

mentioned in Acts, although three of them are (being beaten in Philippi, being stoned in Lystra, and escaping in a basket from Damascus).

4. Paul's thorn in the flesh, 12:1-10

Paul tells how God granted him wonderful heavenly visions, and then kept him from pride by giving him a physical affliction, perhaps affecting his eyes. In spite of his prayers, the Lord told Paul he must not be cured from it. It is more important to have God's help and grace than to have the problem taken away (v. 9).

5. Paul's care for the Corinthians, 12:11-21

Unlike the "super apostles," Paul seeks the good of the church in Corinth. He is fully an apostle, with the accompanying signs (v. 12), yet he does not insist on being treated like royalty. Rather, as a parent, he sacrifices for the church.

And as a parent, Paul is concerned that the Corinthians may fall into sin; thus, his concern for them (vv. 19-21).

VII. Need for self-examination, and conclusion, ch. 13

The church members must use this occasion of Paul's visit to examine themselves. He is coming to build them up, but they must be prepared by repenting from sinful ways. Paul is confident of their obedience.

Romans

The church at Rome

As the capital of the empire, Rome was the great city around which Paul's missionary strategy was planned. The book of Acts concludes with Paul's arrival in Rome and his preaching the gospel there. The city already contained a flourishing church, apparently founded very early after Christ's resurrection (cf. Acts 2:10). By Paul's time the church was large and well known (Rom 1:8; 15:23; names in ch. 16); there were several congregations there, probably meeting in homes (Rom 16:5). A majority of the church were Gentiles (Rom 1:5-6; 11:13, 28-31), but apparently a substantial minority were Jewish (Rom 2:17; 3:1; 4:1; ch. 9-11; Aquila and Priscilla in 16:3; cf. Acts 18:2).

The church there undoubtedly suffered serious disruption when Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in A.D. 49. This decree affected both Christian and non-Christian Jews (Acts 18:2). The Roman historian Suetonius states: "Since the Jews were continually making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome" (*Life of Claudius* 25:4). Probably Suetonius confused the rather common name of "Chrestus" with the title for Jesus, "Christus." It seems that the non-Christian Jews in Rome were leading in riots against the believing Jews, a practice quite frequent in Paul's experience. Claudius, not knowing the details, simply expelled all the Jews, assuming that some fellow named "Chrestus" was at the bottom of the trouble. By the time Paul wrote Romans, the Jews were permitted back in Rome, and Aquila and Priscilla had already moved back there.

Peter in Rome

There is some discussion as to the time that Peter was in Rome. Although frequently found in Jerusalem and once in Antioch, Peter is not mentioned in Acts or in the Pauline epistles as being in Rome. But 1 Pet 5:13, "She [the church?] who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings," generally is understood to indicate Rome, "Babylon" being a metonymy indicating the wickedness of Rome and its oppressing of the Jews. It appears that 1 Peter was written ca. A.D. 65, sometime near the deaths of Peter and Paul.

The church fathers wrote that Peter was martyred in Rome, and there is little reason to doubt their testimony.

Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 97) wrote to the Corinthians, mentioning the ministries and deaths of Peter and Paul, in such a way as might suggest that they were martyred there in Rome (*1 Clement* 5, *ANF* 1:6). Irenaeus (*Against Heresies* 3:1:1) said that "Matthew among the Hebrews published a gospel in their own language, while Peter and Paul were preaching the gospel at Rome and founding the church there." Peter and Paul's labors and martyrdoms under Nero are explicitly connected to Rome by Tertullian (ca. A.D.

200; *Scorpiace* 15, *ANF* 3:648; *On Prescription Against Heretics* 36, *ANF* 3:260). Following the tradition, Eusebius, the early fourth century church historian, places their deaths in Rome at the hands of Nero (*Ecclesiastical History* 2:25).

However, since there is no convincing evidence that Peter was in Rome prior to Paul's third missionary journey, we can assume that he did not come to Rome until after Paul wrote Romans.

Occasion of writing

Near the end of his third missionary journey, Paul remained in Corinth during the winter/spring of A.D. 54 (Acts 20:3-4). Paul was staying with his host Gaius, whom he had baptized when he started the church on his second missionary journey (1 Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23). Paul sent the letter to the Roman church by Phoebe, who is called a "deaconess." She probably was traveling from Cenchrea to Rome on business (Rom 16:1-2). Assuming that Phoebe and Paul both left Corinth about the same time, the letter probably arrived in Rome when Paul was en route to Jerusalem.

There were two main purposes in writing:

1) Practical purpose

Paul was planning to first travel to Jerusalem with the offering (Rom 15:25-26), and then travel to Rome and on to Spain (Rom 1:9-15; 15:23-29). This letter was to prepare for his visit, so that the church in Rome would receive him and aid him on his continuing journey to the west.

2) Doctrinal purpose

In this epistle Paul laid out the doctrinal groundwork for his visit. This included encouraging the church, clearing up difficulties, and solving some of the practical problems they faced. If he had written Galatians during this missionary journey, the doctrines of salvation would have been on his mind, and he would have desired to inoculate the Roman church against the heresies attacking his churches. The best defense is a good offense, and in Romans Paul set out clearly and magnificently the whole scope of God's salvation.

Points of interest in Romans

- Lengthy introduction
- Many names in conclusion (26 names in Rome)

- Most treatise-like epistle
- Luther's conversion verse, Rom 1:17
- Classic natural theology passage, 1:18-32
- Abraham and David justified by faith alone, ch. 4
- Federal headships of Adam and Christ, 5:12-21
- Baptism, symbol of death, 6:1-10
- Anti-perfectionism passage, 7:14-25
- Assurance by the Holy Spirit, ch. 8
- Missionary passage, 10:13-17
- All Israel to be saved, 11:26-32
- Classic government passage, 13:1-7
- True Christian liberty, ch. 14
- Paul's missionary strategy, 15:14-22
- Separation from heretics, 16:17
- Excellent salvation verses (the "Romans Road"), 1:16; 3:23; 5:8; 6:23; 8:1; 10:9-10

Outline of Romans

I. Introduction, 1:1-17

Paul begins with a warm greeting, emphasizing his place as an apostle of the gospel of God, the theme of the book. He explains how he desires to visit the Romans, especially since he is commissioned by God to carry the gospel to all people, Gentile as well as Jew.

The gospel is the power of God, since it reveals the righteousness of God, which saves as well as judges. This salvation comes through faith. The rest of the book expounds this great theme.

II. Mankind guilty before God, 1:18 - 3:20

Before showing the way of salvation, Paul proves the universal need of salvation. The gospel is truly for Jew and Gentile. We are lost in sin and condemned without the righteousness of God.

1. The Gentiles guilty, 1:18-32

God's wrath against the Gentiles who are idolaters is shown by his judicial hardening of their hearts. They do not even live up to the truths revealed in nature and in their consciences; they "suppress" these truths. Nature reveals the power and divinity of God, yet they construct their own gods which are weaker than themselves; thus they actually worship themselves.

Apostasy in theology brings apostasy in morals. The result of idolatry is unbridled sinfulness, including all sorts of perversions, which are self-evidently harmful as well as immoral. In spite of their knowledge of God's law, they insist on disobedience and rebellion.

2. The Jews guilty, ch. 2 - 3:8

The Jews should not look down on the Gentiles as great sinners. The Jews are sinners as well. They have spurned God's mercy, and by their pride and disobedience to the law are themselves treasuring up God's wrath.

God's requirements are greater for the Jews, who have his law. While the Gentiles will be judged on the basis of their conscience, the Jews will have a stricter standard. Gentiles who are saved have God's law written on their hearts, as promised by the new covenant; they will be received instead of unconverted Jews.

While Jews rely on their standing and knowledge of the law, their lives reveal an unbelieving and disobedient heart. Circumcision must be spiritual, not just physical. A true believer in Christ, whether Jew or Gentile, is a true Jew; for he is circumcised in the heart.

No one should complain that God is unfair to the Jews, for he has given them many precious privileges. He has ordained that many Jews would not believe, in order that his righteousness might be revealed to both the Gentiles and the Jews. His justice and mercy are shown in this way. (This theme is expanded later in the epistle, ch. 9-11.)

3. All the world guilty, 3:9-20

Paul concludes this section with a chain of OT quotations, showing the depravity of the unregenerate heart, “There is no one righteous, not even one.” Therefore, he concludes, the whole world is guilty before God.

III. Justification by faith alone, 3:21 - ch. 4

Major contrast from previous section, introduced by *νυνὶ δέ nuni de*, “but now.”

Having shown the need for a divine work of salvation, Paul devotes the heart of this epistle to showing how God himself provides salvation: his righteousness will stand for that of the sinner. How is this righteousness of God to be obtained? Only through faith; no deeds of the law can merit this salvation. Paul shows how God’s salvation has always been obtained by faith alone, especially using the OT examples of Abraham and David.

1. God’s righteousness by faith, 3:21-31

The great divide in Romans is between verses 20 and 21. Where man has failed, God has provided a way; through Christ’s atonement he will supply his own righteousness to those who rely on him, who have “faith in his blood.”

Since God himself brings salvation, there can be no boasting on our part. We can never live up to the law’s expectations; we are justified (declared righteous in God’s sight; cf. Prov 17:15; Isa 5:23) by faith. Faith does not deny the law; rather, it establishes the law in its perfection.

2. Abraham and David justified by faith, ch. 4

Paul shows that this truth is proved by the OT. Abraham received God’s justification because of his faith (vv. 3 and 22, quoting Gen 15:6). Abraham was not justified because he submitted to the law of circumcision; he exercised this faith and was declared justified before he was circumcised. In this passage, Paul concentrates on the time in Abraham’s life when he believed God’s promise made to him and Sarah, when he was about 100 years old (Gen 17). Incidentally, Rom. 4 adds light to the story told in Genesis, showing that Abraham did after all believe God’s promise.

Likewise David, who sinned and broke God’s law, still rejoiced to know that he was justified by faith. Paul proves this by reference to Psalm 32 (Rom 4:6-8). He obviously was not saved by his works, but through faith.

The way of salvation through faith was just the same in the OT as it is in the NT.

IV. The fruits of justification, ch. 5-8

The truth of justification has many wonderful benefits for the believer. It brings peace with God, victory over sin, and assurance of God's favor. These truths enable the Christian to live confidently in the world, and to live a holy life which will bless him and others.

1. Justification and peace with God, 5:1-11

Since we are justified by our faith, we have peace with God. All that happens in our lives, even evil things, we know come from God's love, not his judgment. This peace has been purchased by Christ's blood, and therefore there is no fear that God's wrath will again be directed against us. We have been reconciled to him.

2. Jesus, our federal head, 5:12-21

Justification brings us into a new relationship with Christ. Instead of being a condemning judge, he is our substitute, our federal head.

This important theological passage compares and contrasts Christ and Adam. Just as Adam is the federal head of all mankind, so Jesus is the federal head of his people. This headship is based on the covenants of God (called by theologians the covenant of works and the covenant of redemption or of grace).

There are similarities between the two heads. Each of them is one man, doing one great deed, standing for all his people, bringing the consequences on all his people. An important point of comparison is shown by the use of the word "made" in verse 19; in each case, the person is "made," or "constituted" a sinner or righteous; in this passage it refers not to his actual deeds but to his standing before God. This explains how God can declare righteous someone who actually is a sinner (cf. 4:5).

On the other hand, there are important differences. Adam brings death through sin; Christ brings life through obedience. Adam's work is powerful, but Christ's is more powerful, reversing the consequences of Adam's. Adam brings not only guilt on his offspring, but the sinful nature which leads to actual sins; Christ brings not only justification, but new spiritual life which leads in the way of holiness.

3. Justification and holiness of life, ch. 6 – 7:6

Some may think that the doctrine of justification by faith would lead to sinfulness of life. If we are not saved by good works, then why not enjoy a sinful life? Paul strongly answers this antinomianism (denial of law).

Receiving God's righteousness by faith, the Christian must recognize himself to be dead to his old sinful nature, and now alive to his new nature. In baptism the Christian symbolizes his death to sin, and his spiritual resurrection to new life. True faith will always include this change of heart. Calvin has said, "We are saved by faith alone; but faith that saves never is alone." The Christian is someone who reckons himself to be dead to sin and alive unto Christ.

Paul uses two illustrations to show the profound effect justification brings to our life.

(1) A slave changing masters (6:15-23)

Sin was our old master; now we have been purchased by a new master, Christ. We must serve him, not the old master.

(2) A wife whose husband dies (7:1-6)

A wife is bound to her husband while he lives; but if he dies she is released from that bond, and may marry another. Likewise we have died to sin; so there is nothing binding us to continue under its dominion.

4. The struggle with sin, 7:7-25

Paul does not discount the power of sin in the life of people, both before and after salvation. He recognizes that justifying faith comes from an awareness of one's sin, and still does not totally eliminate sin. He uses himself as an example.

The verb tenses in this section change from past to present between verses 13 and 14, showing his own experience in two stages: before he was saved, and after he was saved.

a. Paul before his conversion, 7:7-13

Sin was powerful in his life, but he was not aware of its power until confronted by the law. The law not only exposed his sin to his eyes, it also produced an amazing reaction: it caused him to sin even more! Knowing that it was a sin against God just made him want to do it again. (Augustine points out this root of sinfulness in his own *Confessions*. As a

boy he stole pears, not because he was hungry, but because it was forbidden.) The particular sin Paul mentions was covetousness, forbidden in the tenth commandment. Many have seen in this section a parallel with the account of Adam and Eve's fall in Gen 3.

b. Paul after his conversion, 7:14-25

Paul sees a difference now: he has the law of God in his heart and genuinely desires to keep it (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19, 22, 25); an unregenerate person can never have this heart desire (cf. 8:5-7). On the other hand, he finds his old nature, his "members," "body," etc., warring against his heart. His old sinful habits and attitudes die hard, and Paul despairs that in this life he will ever be able to extinguish his sin. Only in the resurrection will he find relief from this battle (vv. 24-25).

Sanctification is a process. This passage is a strong antidote to those who claim "Christian perfection." It is encouraging to us all that even Paul had to struggle against his old nature.

5. From justification to glory, ch. 8

Paul does not conclude on a negative note. While sin does continue to exert its power, we have a greater power within us, and we shall finally overcome totally.

The believer comes to faith by the Holy Spirit, given in regeneration. The Holy Spirit (mentioned many times in Rom 8) indwells us, overcoming the sinful nature more and more. This is the power that raised Jesus from the dead, and will raise us too (v. 11). The Spirit assures us that we are God's children, heirs of eternal life.

The glory that is coming far surpasses present sufferings. The whole creation awaits the new age, inaugurated when Christ returns to earth.

Meanwhile, we are sure of God's care, protection, and preserving power. If we have been chosen to salvation and have been justified, we shall certainly be glorified. This assurance gives us blessed peace in this world filled with enemies and trials. We are always and will always be in the love of God.

V. Israel's relation to the church, ch. 9-11

This section of the book is an important link in the chain of Paul's argument. It has been anticipated in chapter 1, but now is called for by the end of chapter 8. If God promises to preserve his elect people, how is it that most of the Jewish nation

has departed from God, has rejected Christ, and is lost? Have they been separated from God's love? Paul answers this question magnificently and elegantly in these chapters.

1. God's sovereignty in election, 9:1-21

Paul begins by asserting God's sovereignty to choose whomever he will for salvation. The OT clearly shows that he did not elect all of Abraham's descendants; the line of Ishmael was excluded, likewise that of Esau. God narrowed down the elect ones without regard to their actions, but simply to further his own purpose.

Paul offers the illustration of Pharaoh, whom God raised up, not to save, but to harden his heart and to condemn, showing God's power over him. Pharaoh was created for God's glory.

We cannot escape responsibility by blaming God or complaining. God is the potter, we are the clay; he can do as he wills with us.

2. Israel's fall, and the remnant, 9:22 - 11:10

Most of chapters 9-11 is taken up describing the way God is dealing with his chosen nation of Israel.

Paul first explains why the nation as a whole has not been faithful to the Lord. The prophets predicted a time when Israel would not be "God's people" (9:22-29). Israel sought to be accepted by God by her own merit, not by simple loyalty to God and faith in him; this is shown by their failure to receive Christ (9:30-33).

Israel has many privileges (cf. 9:1-5), yet they are zealous for a law that reflects their own pride; they are not humble before God. The way of salvation is plain before them, but they have not heeded it (ch. 10).

But Paul recognizes that a remnant of the nation does believe in the Lord, as he promised (11:1-10).

3. God's plan for salvation for Jew and Gentile, 11:11-36

Paul shows in this section the purpose of God in the fall of the Jews, the salvation of the remnant, the salvation of many Gentiles, and the final restoration of the Jews. The purpose is to display God's wisdom and power.

The Jews have fallen from their place of privilege in order to open the way for God to bring in the Gentiles. Yet God will not leave the Jews in unbelief. His

covenants with them promise that the nation will be restored, and Paul insists that this time of unbelief is temporary (vv. 11-12, 15, 23-24, 25-27, 28, 31). God has promised; he will restore the nation and bring them to repentance and salvation.

In the meantime, their unbelief has opened the way for the Gentiles to receive the promises made to the Jews (cf. Matt 21:43). Paul compares them to an olive tree. The roots and sap are the patriarchs and the promises. The natural branches are broken off for unbelief (the Jews, hardened by God), and wild branches are grafted in (the Gentiles, given faith by God). Thus the Gentile church is one body with the OT saints, and shares the same covenants. In time, God will graft in again the natural branches as well. Thus, in this manner (“And so”), “the fullness of the Gentiles” and “all Israel” will be saved (vv. 25-26).

This unforeseen path of salvation reveals the great wisdom and glory of God, as Paul indicates in the magnificent doxology which closes the section (vv. 33-36).

VI. Practical Christian living, ch. 12 - 15:13

The practical section of Romans begins with 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.” This new attitude will reveal itself in the various relationships the Christian will have. In this epistle Paul emphasizes the relationships with each other in the church and in the state.

1. Personal associations, ch. 12

One of the first areas of Christian transformation will be one’s attitude toward others. Paul warns us to think of ourselves as members of the body, with certain gifts, in need of the gifts of others as well. We must show love to others, even to those who persecute us. We thus can overcome evil with good.

2. The Christian and the state, 13:1-7

Since rulers are established by God for the proper ordering of society, and are ministers of God’s laws, they are entitled to the respect, taxes, and dues of the Christians. On the other hand, they are responsible to praise the good and bring God’s vengeance on the wicked.

3. Love and God’s commandments, 13:8-14

Some put a difference between keeping God’s commandments and loving one’s fellow men. Paul shows that love is the fulfilling of the law, and that the law

defines what love is. The Christian life is a life of love, ordered by God's Ten Commandments (summarized by Christ in the two Great Commandments).

4. Weak and strong brothers, ch. 14 - 15:13

Much of the trouble in the churches was caused by the varying understanding of the Christians. Some were strong, recognizing what God required and the freedom he has granted, especially in external matters. Others were weak, thinking that God has imposed external regulations besides those of the moral law; for them to do what the strong Christians were doing would be sin, for they thought those things were wrong; the weak brothers might easily return to their former sinful life.

The particular issues that troubled the church were eating food offered to idols, and keeping certain religious days.

Paul enjoins both groups to tolerate one another in brotherly love and acceptance. Let each person have his conviction, and live by it. Let not the weak judge the strong, nor the strong look down on the weak. On the other hand, the strong were in a position to sacrifice much of their own freedom in order to protect the weak (14:15-21).

To love one another above the exercise of one's own freedom, requires the grace of God, which he will bestow (15:5).

VII. Paul's missionary plans, 15:14-33

Paul compares his missionary work to that of a priest, bringing God's salvation to the people. He desires to bring God's salvation to the Gentiles, as God has commissioned him. He especially desires to take the gospel to areas not before evangelized, all around the Mediterranean (15:19-20).

An important part of that plan is his planned trip to Rome. He tells them to prepare for his arrival, and to aid his planned trip to Spain (vv. 23-29). In the meantime, he asks their prayers for a successful trip to Jerusalem and a good reception of his offering there (vv. 30-32).

VIII. Greetings and conclusion, ch. 16

After introducing Phoebe (vv. 1-2) Paul sends his greetings to many of the Christians in Rome known to him (vv. 3-16; there are 26 names plus 2 others—

mother and sister). This long list proves the substantial size of the church, and the ease of travel in the Roman empire at the time.

Paul does not conclude the letter before warning the Roman Christians about heretics who will seek to divide the church and lead it astray; they must be avoided (vv. 17-19).

Paul concludes the epistle with greetings from Timothy and others. The amanuensis Tertius adds his own greeting (v. 22). The fulsome doxology at the end repeats many of the main themes of the epistle.