

New Testament Survey

Unit 317 – Foundations 3

Week 3 – Session 1
Pauline Epistles (Eschatological)



A. Introduction to the Pauline Epistles

21 of the 27 New Testament books are epistles (excluding Revelation). 13 of these were written by the Apostle Paul.

The 13 Pauline epistles can be broken up into four categories:

- a. **Eschatological** epistles - 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- b. **Soteriological** epistles - Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Romans
- c. **Prison** epistles - Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians
- d. **Pastoral** epistles - 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus

The notion of an authoritative writing from a church leader to a congregation or individual was a logical development of the geographical spread of the church. However, since such a writing involved far more than would normally be associated with personal or business correspondence, the Christian epistle is as distinct a literary form as the gospel.

Four persons / parties were involved in the process of sending an epistle:

1. The **author** - generally a person whose authority is recognised by the recipient, often an apostle. At times it would appear that others are associated with the author in the writing of the epistle, E.G. where Paul uses a first person plural in his writings.
2. **The secretary or scribe.** The use of these professionals was common in antiquity, since the average household or individual did not stock writing materials, which were costly. The New Testament authors may well have made use of public secretaries, but more likely they used Christians who could fill the slot.
3. **The messenger.** The ancient world lacked a public postal system, so written communications were sent by hand. In the case of the Christian epistles, the messenger might be expected to expand on the content and intent of the epistle to the recipient - in fact, the messenger would probably also be the one who would read it to the congregation.
4. The **recipient.** These could be individuals (e.g. Timothy), a local church (e.g. Philippi), or a group of churches or believers (e.g. Galatians). Sometimes the recipient is not specifically stated (e.g. 1 John).

An Epistle or a letter?

The distinction between a letter and an epistle might be made as follows:

- A **letter** is a personal communication intended for a single recipient, dealing with news or needs which are limited and immediate. The content may be both personal and/or business;

- An **epistle**, despite its personal content and origin, is an official document dealing with what might be local and immediate situations, but prescribing practices and doctrines which transcend such limitations.

Even Paul's most personal writings (Galatians, Corinthians, 2 Timothy and Philemon) are seen to be far more than mere letters. It is clear that he wrote not just to communicate immediate information and advice, but to provide an authoritative and theologically consistent perspective upon the business at hand.

Who was Paul the Apostle?

Paul was born to Jewish parents as Saul. He was Roman citizen who lived in Tarsus (in modern day eastern Turkey). Saul studied Judaism and the Torah under Gamaliel in Jerusalem and became a respected Pharisee. He fervently persecuted the Christian church but eventually converted to the faith after a dramatic encounter with the resurrected Jesus on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6). About 10 years after his conversion he was invited by Barnabas to join the church in Syrian Antioch (Acts 11:25) which became the base from which he launched his 3 missionary journeys into Asia Minor. Paul considered himself to be 'an apostle to the Gentiles' (Galatians 2:8; Romans 11:3) and was powerfully used by God to bring both Jews and non-Jews to faith in Jesus. He planted several churches throughout the Roman Empire, most notably in the region of Galatia and even as far as Corinth in Greece. Tradition says that he may have gone as far as Spain although there is no record of that trip in Acts. Eventually Paul was arrested in Rome where he was put to death by Nero in 64 A.D. Many believe that Paul's name was changed from 'Saul' to 'Paul' at his conversion but this is most likely not the case as the use of the name Saul only starts appearing in Acts 13 (more than a decade after Paul's conversion) which means Paul could have been his Roman name and Saul his Hebrew name. For a detailed timeline of Paul's life and ministry see the Appendix at the end of this sessions notes.

B. The Eschatological Epistles of Paul

1 & 2 Thessalonians

Paul reached Thessalonica as the second major stop during his second missionary journey. Named after the step-sister of Alexander the Great, and situated at the head of the Thermaic Gulf, this was a large city. The main east-west land route passed through it, and it was also the capital of Macedonia. As a result, it was an important centre of trade, and had a large Jewish population.

Paul began, as was his habit, in the synagogues, and succeeded in converting numerous Greek proselytes of the Jewish religion to Christianity. This caused resentment and riot among the Jews, and Paul was forced by their action to leave the city. Since he had only been there a few weeks, the believers were left without counsel from the apostle. For this reason Paul communicated with them very shortly after his departure, since he was obviously concerned for their spiritual well-being.

1 Thessalonians

Background:

This epistle was written after Timothy returned from Thessalonica to join Paul in Achaia. It was written from Corinth. There seem to have been a number of reasons for Paul writing it:

1. **Persecution** had broken out. Paul sought to comfort and encourage them in their trials (2:14; 3:1-4).
2. **Paul defends his conduct**, since pagans appeared to have been questioning his motives in ministering in Thessalonica (2:1-12).
3. Many converts had only recently been pagans, and needed to have **Christian morality** expounded to them (4:1-8).
4. There was confusion about what happened to **Christians who died**; some appeared to be following pagan burial customs and rites (4:13-18).
5. **Those who did not work**, but appeared to be 'waiting for His coming', needed rebuke (4:11).
6. There appeared to be some misunderstanding concerning **spiritual gifts** (5:19).

Outline of contents:

1:1-10	Thanks for conversion and zeal of Thessalonians
2:1-12	Review and defence of Paul's conduct there
2:13-16	The effect of Paul's ministry there
2:17 - 3:16	Paul's love and concern for them
3:11-13	A prayer for them
4:1-8	Christian standard of holiness
4:9-10	Brotherly love
4:11-12	Orderly conduct
4:13-18	Death, the Christian, and Christ's return
5:1-11	Watchfulness and sobriety
5:12-22	Brief exhortations
5:23-24	A prayer
5:25-27	Final requests
5:28	Benediction

Date of writing:

Written from Corinth during Paul's first stay there. This was during the rule of Gallio as proconsul of Achaia. From inscriptions this can be dated as **51-52 AD**.

2 Thessalonians

This letter appears to have been written fairly shortly after the first epistle. Unfortunately, there is no reason given in the epistle for it having been written at all, nor in Acts. However, it may be deduced that:

1. Paul had learnt of certain **unsatisfactory conditions** in Thessalonica (3:11);
2. **Someone had written them a letter**, as though from Paul, promoting a false line of teaching on the Lord's Return.

If the latter reason was the most compelling, we may also be sure that Paul was also intent on maintaining contact with the Thessalonian church.

Outline of contents:

1:1-4	Thankful for growth during their persecution
1:5-10	Christ will bring justice with their return
1:11-12	A prayer for them
2:1-12	Correction of false notion of Lord's Return
2:13-17	Thanksgiving and prayer
3:1-5	Call for mutual support and encouragement
3:6-15	Warning against those who are not willing to work
3:16-18	Benediction and salutation

Conclusion

The importance of 1 Thessalonians for us today lies in its teaching on how to handle persecution; about how different it is for a Christian when they die, as compared to unbelievers; and how differently people should live when they convert to Christianity.

The importance of 2 Thessalonians for us today lies in its teaching on the second coming of Jesus, and how we should be careful not to be misled, and how we should carry on with our daily work as we await Jesus' return.

Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 3:13 (NIV)

“May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones”.

Appendix

The Early Life of Paul the Apostle After His Conversion

A.D. 6 - Born a Roman citizen to Jewish parents in Tarsus (in modern eastern Turkey)

A.D. 0–30 - Studies Torah in Jerusalem with Gamaliel; becomes a Pharisee

A.D. 30–33 - Persecutes followers of Jesus of Nazareth in Jerusalem and Judea

A.D. 33–36 - Converted on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-6)

Saul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. These are the few days in Damascus during which he receives understanding that he would be messenger to the Gentiles and “does not confer with flesh and blood” (Gal 1:16). He then goes into Arabia, spent the three years there and returned to Damascus (*and returned again to Damascus, Gal 1: 17*).

Galatians: 1:15-17: ¹⁵*But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, ¹⁷nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.*

It is here at Damascus after he returns from Arabia that he first preaches Christ in the synagogues.

Acts 9:20: ²⁰*Immediately he preached \square the Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. ²¹Then all who heard were amazed, and said, “Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?” ²²But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. ²³Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. ²⁴But their plot became known to Saul. And they watched the gates day and night, to kill him. ²⁵Then the disciples took him by night and let him down through the wall in a large basket.*

A.D. 36 - Flees Damascus because of persecution; visits Jerusalem and meets with the apostles

At this point he escapes death in Damascus by being let down over the wall in a basket and goes to Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion. Here he tries to join with the believers but he finds acceptance hard until Barnabas speaks on his behalf.

Acts 9:26: ²⁶*And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how*

he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Here in Jerusalem during a fifteen-day visit, Paul meets Peter first and then James, but none of the other Apostles. He then spends a period of time preaching the gospel in the regions of Syria and Cilicia.

Gal 1:18: ¹⁸*Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days. ¹⁹But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. ²⁰(Now concerning the things which I write to you, indeed, before God, I do not lie.)*

Gal 1: 21-24: ²¹*Afterward I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. ²²And I was unknown by face to the churches of Judea which were in Christ. ²³But they were hearing only, "He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy." ²⁴And they glorified God in me.*

It seems that he used Jerusalem as a home base for his trips into the region of Syria and Cilicia and that he established a good level of acceptance in Jerusalem among the believers. However, in due course he aggravates the Hellenists to the point that they want to kill him and the disciples send Paul, first to Caesarea and then to Tarsus.

Acts 9:28-30: ²⁸*So he was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. ²⁹And he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. ³⁰When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus.*

A.D. 36–44 - Preaches in Tarsus and surrounding region

A.D. 44–46 - Invited by Barnabas to teach in Antioch

Paul departs from Caesarea to Tarsus where he spends the 8 years waiting for something to happen, and then Barnabas arrives and takes him back to Syrian Antioch.

Acts 11:25-30: ²⁵*Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.²⁷And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. ²⁹Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. ³⁰This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.*

A.D. 46 - With Barnabas visits Jerusalem to bring a famine relief offering

At this point Paul goes up to Jerusalem with Barnabas and Titus to hand over the money collected to relieve the famine and to meet the Apostles. So the Acts 11:30 visit to Jerusalem is the same as the Gal 2:1 visit.

Galatians 2:1-3; 7-10: *¹Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain.*

⁷But on the contrary, when they saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter ⁸(for He who worked effectively in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles), ⁹and when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing which I also was eager to do.

A.D. 47–48 - First missionary journey with Barnabas, to Cyprus and Galatia

A.D. 49 - At the Council of Jerusalem, Paul argues successfully that Gentile Christians need not follow Jewish law; returns to Antioch; confronts Peter over question of Jewish law

A.D. 49–52 - Second missionary journey with Silas, through Asia Minor and Greece; settles in Corinth; writes letters to Thessalonians

A.D. 52 - Visits Jerusalem and Antioch briefly; begins third missionary journey

A.D. 52–55 - Stays in Ephesus; writes the letters to Galatians and Corinthians

A.D. 55–57 - Travels through Greece and possibly Illyricum (modern Yugoslavia); writes letter to Romans

A.D. 57–59 Returns to Jerusalem and arrested; imprisoned at Caesarea

A.D. 59–60 Appears before Festus and appeals to Caesar; voyage to Rome

A.D. 60–62 Under house arrest at Rome; writes letters to Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon

A.D. 62–64 Released; journeys to Spain?; writes letters to Timothy and Titus

A.D. 64 Returns to Rome where he is martyred

New Testament Survey

Unit 317 – Foundations 3

Week 3 – Session 2
Pauline Epistles (Soteriological)



A. The Epistle to the Galatians

Author:

This letter was clearly written by Paul. The very first verse refers to “Paul, an Apostle” as the author and in (5:2) we read, “Indeed, I Paul, say to you...”

Location:

There are two theories regarding the time and location of the writing of Galatians. The South Galatian theory holds that it was written in Syrian Antioch around 47-49 AD. The North Galatian theory holds that it was written between 53-56 AD in Ephesus or Macedonia.

Background:

The term Galatia was used to refer to the central part of Asia minor where the Celtic tribes had settled. Later, in 189 BC Galatia came under Roman rule and the territory of Galatia was extended to the south to include cities visited by Paul during his first missionary journey (Psidian Lystra, Antioch, Iconium and Derbe). The north Galatian theory holds that Paul wrote the letter to the churches north of the ones he had visited during his first missionary journey. He only visited the northern churches during his second missionary journey, hence the argument for a later date of authorship (53-56 AD). The south Galatian theory holds that Paul wrote the letter to both the southern and the northern churches i.e. the province of Galatia as a whole and that he included the southern churches he had visited on his first missionary journey. If this were so, an earlier date of authorship is very likely (47-49 AD), just prior to the Jerusalem council (Acts 15).

This is one of the central Pauline epistles, dealing explicitly with a problem which plagued the pioneer of evangelisation of the Gentiles until the end of his life. The single most compelling question for the first two generations of Christians was: **What was the relationship between Gentile believers and Jewish customs and covenants?** Echoes of this problem are found to a greater or lesser extent in all Paul's other writings, more so in Romans and Ephesians.

The churches in the Galatians region had been visited by **Judaisers**, men who sought to impose Jewish customs and rituals upon Gentile converts, arguing that circumcision was essential for salvation. To achieve their end, they found it expedient to deride the **character** and **ministry** of Paul. They appear to have had one man as their ringleader (5:10).

In this epistle Paul is forced to defend both the authenticity of his apostleship, and the character of the gospel he preaches. This he does in a militant style equalled only by 2 Corinthians 10-13. He uses every type of argument available to him. In doing so he has provided the definitive solution to the problem, although it took another generation before it was universally accepted.

Characteristics:

1. The tone of the letter is **sharp**, both toward the Judaisers and the Galatians.
2. The letter **proceeds abruptly to the problem**, with no customary preamble - this shows the intensity of Paul's urgency.
3. The **writer is versatile** in his approach to the problem: he uses Scripture, experience, logic, warning, exhortation etc.
4. This is the **most autobiographical** of Paul's letters after 2 Corinthians. Paul's story has direct bearing upon the matter at hand.
5. The **ending is unique**, in the apostle's own handwriting with large letters.
6. This is the only epistle of Paul directed to a **group of churches**.

Theology of Galatians:

The theology of Galatians can be summed up as follows:

- a. Salvation is not by merit earned by keeping the Law;
- b. Salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ, who justifies the believer;
- c. The Law was not given to save, but to prepare the way for the redemptive work of Christ;
- d. Works acceptable to God are the product of the indwelling Spirit, and cannot be rivalled by human attempts to keep the Law.

Having defended the AUTHENTICITY of his APOSTLESHIP (Ch. 1+2) and the AUTHORITY of his GOSPEL (Ch. 3+4), Paul then turns to the practical APPLICATION of that gospel (Ch. 5+6).

There are 3 primary consequences of the Gospel of Grace:

1. Christian Liberty
2. Christian Character (“Being”) – manifest in the fruit of the Spirit
3. Christian Conduct (“Doing”) – manifest in the practical demonstration of love

In Chapter 5:1 Paul introduces us to the first effect / result of embracing the Gospel of Grace: Christian Liberty.

In 5:13-14 Paul refers to the 3 primary themes of the epistle – LAW, LIBERTY and LOVE. Each represents a level or maturity in the faith life.

1. **LAW** (Regulations) – “immaturity” – danger of legalism (justified by law)
2. **LIBERTY** (Rights) – danger of licentiousness (self-indulgence)
3. **LOVE** (Responsibilities) – “maturity”

Significant events in Galatia:

- Paul and Silas preach in the synagogues (Acts 13:5).
- Elymas the sorcerer is blinded by Paul (Acts 13:13).
- John (Mark) leaves Paul and Barnabas at Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13).
- Paul and Barnabas preach in the synagogues in Antioch (Acts 13:14-50).
- After being expelled from Antioch they move to Iconium (Acts 13:5-52).
- Angry Jews make violent attempts to kill the apostles, they flee to Lystra where a lame man is healed. Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for heathen gods and fail to convince the people otherwise. Later, some Jews from Antioch and Iconium come down and convince the people in Lystra to stone Paul (Acts 14:1-19).
- Paul and Silas then depart for Derbe, Preach the gospel and make many disciples (Acts 14:20-21).
- After returning to the previously visited cities and appointing elders, they return to Antioch (Syrian) and report on their journey (Acts 14:22-28).
- After returning to Antioch, Paul receives reports of false teachings coming into the churches in Galatia through certain Judaizers who believed in Christ yet wanted to place the Gentile converts under Mosaic Law. The epistle to the Galatians is Paul's response.

Outline of contents:

I.	The Gospel of Grace Defended	1:1–2:21
A.	Introduction	1:1–9
B.	The Gospel of Grace Is Given by Divine Revelation	1:10–24
C.	The Gospel of Grace Is Approved by Jerusalem Leadership	2:1–10
D.	The Gospel of Grace Is Vindicated by Rebuking Peter	2:11–21
II.	The Gospel of Grace Explained	3:1–4:31
A.	The Holy Spirit Is Given by Faith, Not by Works	3:1–5
B.	Abraham Was Justified by Faith, Not by Works	3:6–9
C.	Justification Is by Faith, Not by the Law	3:10–4:11
1.	Christ Redeems Us from the Curse of the Law	3:10–14
2.	The Abrahamic Covenant Is Not Voided by the Law	3:15–18
3.	Law Is Given to Drive Us to Faith	3:19–22
4.	Believers Are Free from the Law	3:23–4:11
D.	Galatians Receive Blessings by Faith, Not by the Law	4:12–20
E.	Law and Grace Cannot Co-exist	4:21–31

III. The Gospel of Grace Applied**5:1–6:18**

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| A. | Position of Liberty: Stand Fast | 5:1–12 |
| B. | Practice of Liberty: Love One Another | 5:13–15 |
| C. | Power for Liberty: Walk in the Spirit | 5:16–26 |
| 1. | Conflict between the Spirit and the Flesh | 5:16–18 |
| 2. | Works of the Flesh | 5:19–21 |
| 3. | Fruit of the Spirit | 5:22–26 |
| D. | Performance in Liberty: Do Good to All | 6:1–10 |
| 1. | Bear One Another's Burdens | 6:1–5 |
| 2. | Do Not Be Weary While Doing Good | 6:6–10 |
| E. | Conclusion | 6:11–18 |
| 1. | Motives of the Circumcised | 6:11–13 |
| 2. | Motives of the Apostle Paul | 6:14–18 |

B. Introduction to 1 and 2 Corinthians

The city of **Corinth** was situated on the narrow isthmus (land strip) between the Aegean Sea (where Cenchrea was its port) and the Gulf of Corinth (where Lechaem fulfilled the function). Destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, it was rebuilt some time later, and at the time of Paul was a large commercial city, the capital of Achaia, and populated by some 500 000 people. Although philosophy and speculation were part of the common Greek heritage of the city, there were no major original thinkers or scholars there. **Primary pursuits were money and pleasure.** The dominant religion was veneration of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of sensual love. Her temple on the Acrocorinth dominated the skyline. Her priestesses served as 'hostesses' of the city's night-life. Archaeology has revealed vast stadia and buildings devoted to sports, music and drama. It was a meeting place between the brutal west and the sensual east.

The **founding of the church** there is recorded in Acts 18. Paul worked in the market-place with Priscilla and Aquila, making tents. On Sabbath days he preached in the synagogue, until he was forced by Jewish hostility to relocate elsewhere. He ministered a total of 18 months there. He was encouraged by a divine visitation, and was vindicated after his opponents dragged him before the proconsul, Gallio. **Converts** were apparently mainly of the lower order of society (1 Corinthians 1:26), although there were learned and able exceptions such as Sosthenes and Erastus.

Paul's relations with the church at Corinth

After eighteen months Paul departed for Ephesus, where he stayed for his longest ministry in one place. Apollos replaced him as labourer, and no doubt he and Sosthenes would have kept Paul informed of events there.

Paul's correspondence with Corinth seems have totalled **four letters**:

1. 1 Corinthians 5:9 refers to the first known letter, which apparently was limited to **warning believers against fraternising with immoral believers**. This had been misunderstood to mean all immoral men, and Paul now confirms that he meant only immoral Christians. Since this is made clear in 1 Corinthians, perhaps the earlier letter was then destroyed.
2. **1 Corinthians was the second letter**. It was apparently prompted by reports of conditions in the church which Paul found disturbing. These were primarily a lack of harmony, and schisms based on discipleship of mere humans, as reported by Chloe's household. It seems as though the church has also sent a letter to Paul, asking certain questions on doctrine and lifestyle. These are answered by Paul, usually beginning with the formula: 'Now concerning' (1 Corinthians 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1,12). Paul promises to visit the church in Corinth, by way of Macedonia, but not before Pentecost (1 Corinthians 4:19; 16:5, 8).
3. Another lost letter preceded 2 Corinthians. This is sometimes called **the 'painful letter'**. Paul wrote it in great anguish (2 Corinthians 2:4). The letter was provoked by the failure of both Timothy's visit, and his own later trip. Timothy's report had forced Paul to leave Ephesus to deal with the pride and arrogance of the Corinthians, and he apparently had a hard experience there, which he refers to as having been there 'in sorrow' (2 Corinthians 2:1).
The severe letter was entrusted to Titus (2 Corinthians 12:18). Paul had anxiously awaited Titus' return to Troas, and not finding him there had hurried on the Macedonia. There he found Titus, and was comforted by the news he brought. The ringleader had been dealt with, the church once again recognised the fellowship and authority of Paul (2 Corinthians 2:5ff; 7:5-13).
4. **2 Corinthians was then written against the background of the relief Paul felt** at the change of heart in the church. He expresses his joy, but the latter half of the letter shows that there will still problems in the church.

1 Corinthians

Central to the book is a polemic against the attitude of sublime indifference to the rights of anyone else but oneself. The church appears to have had a generally lax view of morality, and was riotous in its worship and celebration of the Lord's Supper. Individual liberty was prized more highly than the good of the other, or the glory of God. The church was a reflection of its social milieu, in which the humanistic impulses of Greek philosophy were allied to material sufficiency of Corinth to produce many negative qualities in the people.

Characteristics:

1. **Unity of the church**, and sanctified living, are primary themes in this epistle.

2. In common with 2 Corinthians is an **emphasis upon the themes**: gospel, apostleship, need for discipline and judgement for spiritual health.
3. The letter shows the **concern of a father** for his children (4:14-15). They were bad, but still loved. The personal pronoun 'you(pl)' occurs 146 times.

Outline of Contents:

- Chap 1 - 4: Paul deals with the divisions disturbing the harmony of the church.
- Chap 5 - 6: Moral and lifestyle problems: incest and lawsuits.
- Chap 7: Questions of marriage, chastity and celibacy.
- Chap 8 - 10: Rights and responsibilities: eating food offered to idols; concern for weaker brethren; the glory of God the first priority.
- Chap 11: Public worship: the behaviour of women; proper conduct at the Lord's Supper.
- Chap 12 - 14: Spiritual gifts, primarily in the worship service. In the centre of his argument is the ode to *agape* love (13).
- Chap 15: The resurrection of Christ and of the believer.
- Chap 16: Final thoughts, greetings, etc.

2 Corinthians

Characteristics:

1. This is perhaps the **most personal of Paul's epistles**. Sometimes his thought may not always be easy to grasp, but it is easy to 'read his heart'.
2. A **very pastoral letter**. Paul itches to get on with preaching the gospel further afield, but refuses to leave before the Corinthian matter has been sorted out.
3. **Less doctrinal** than the other *Hauptbriefe* (Galatians and Romans) of Paul. Terms such as weakness, grief, peril, tribulation, comfort, boasting, truth, ministry, glory: these set the more personal, intimate and emotional atmosphere of the letter.

Outline of Contents:

- Chap 1 - 2: Thanksgiving for reconciliation with the Corinthian church
- Chap 3 - 6: The sacrificial nature of the apostolic ministry
- Chap 7: Returns to the theme of 1 - 2.
- Chap 8 - 9: Christian giving - the collection for the saints
- Chap 10: Confrontation with the Corinthians
- Chap 11- 13: Comparison between Paul's ministry and that of the arrogant and false apostles.

C. The Epistle to the Romans

The city of Rome

“All roads lead to Rome”. This was true for the road Paul travelled as well. From Jerusalem and Antioch his ministry had covered the north-eastern Mediterranean basin. Now it was time to move westward. Although there was already a church at Rome, he wished to preach there too and then ultimately pass through Rome and on to southern Gaul and Spain (Romans 15:24). Rome was the capital city of the Empire, and also the largest city of the realm. In the later first century it numbered well over a million people and consisted not only of magnificent buildings, but also of vast slum areas. There was there a large population of slaves and many hopefuls who flocked to Rome to seek their fortune (or, for some, merely a chance to survive). The wealth of the empire flowed here and its influence extended to every distant corner of the known world. If the gospel could be firmly established here, then there was no doubt it would eventually find its way to everywhere else.

The founding of the church

Neither Peter nor Paul can be reliably linked to the founding of the Roman church. For Peter we have only the attestations of pious Roman tradition. It appears that both apostles lost their lives in Rome, but this sheds no light on the Christian community's beginnings. The gospel may have spread to Rome after Pentecost, since some Jews from Rome were witnesses to the events there (Acts 2:10). The faith may also have spread from Antioch, since there was a busy trade route between the two centres. It is somehow fitting that the church in the largest centre of the empire should have had such an obscure beginning, and thoroughly in keeping with the modus operandi of the God of the Bible.

In the 50's the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, apparently because they were in uproar about a certain 'Chrestus' (Josephus). This probably refers to the typical Jewish reaction to the proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah (Christ) as was the case in Thessalonica and Corinth, amongst others. This argues for a church in Rome at this time.

If Priscilla and Aquila were already Christians when they arrived in Corinth from Rome (Acts 18:2-3), this would argue for an early date for the establishment of a community of believers there.

By the time of Nero (64 AD, the time of the burning of Rome) Christians were reported to be a 'large multitude' in Rome and the pagan Roman writer Tacitus uses this description to refer to only those who were executed at that time.

Date and place of writing

Paul refers to the collection for the poor saints in chapter 15. This had now been completed, and the apostle was about to proceed to Jerusalem to deliver it. After that he would proceed to Rome. The epistle was probably written shortly after 2 Corinthians (in which Paul tells the Corinthian believers that he is coming to receive the collection from them soon), and probably from Corinth itself. The year would have been about 57 AD.

Paul *did* eventually proceed from Jerusalem to Rome, but not as a free man, and only after two years in detention in Caesarea. It would appear from early tradition that he was freed by Caesar, and may well have gone on to the west as intended. However, shortly afterward he was rearrested. The burning of Rome, for which Christians had been made scapegoats, meant that he had no hope of release again. He was beheaded by Nero at about 65 AD.

Purpose

Paul had completed his work in the east, had only to deliver the collection for the saints in Jerusalem, and would be free to visit Rome and the west. Rome would then be his logical base of operations, as Antioch had been in the east. This letter introduced his gospel to the church he would shortly be visiting.

It takes an almost neutral form for a few reasons. However, simply stated, many of the Romans were not known to Paul (although some were, as is seen in chap 16); they did not appear to be his converts, and he was not the church planter. He had no quarrel with them, and neither was there any particular heresy or misbehaviour he had the desire or the right to address. The epistle is thus a sober summary of the gospel Paul has believed and preached, and the logically consistent lifestyle it engenders. Paul's purpose in writing Romans can therefore be summarised as:

1. To present, in an orderly fashion, the essential logic of his Gospel
2. To resolve ethnic tensions between Jews and Gentiles (14:1-15:13)
3. To prepare the Roman church for his imminent visit (15:23-29)

Characteristics

1. The **introduction is fairly long**. This may be because Paul is writing to a group of mainly strangers, so he 'feels his way' into the epistle.
2. The **conclusion is also unusual**, in that it mentions a huge number of people known personally to Paul.
3. The body of the work is **very impersonal**, more of a treatise (a doctrinal essay) than a letter.
4. The work contains plentiful **reference to the Old Testament** scriptures. More than half of the '*it is written*' of Paul's writings appear in Romans.
5. The argument proceeds in the **form of a debate**; propositions are enunciated, and then questions raised, which lead to further propositions. This may be a literary device, or perhaps even the way Paul habitually taught or preached. EG:
 - Does the fact that some do not believe the gospel mean that it might not be true?
 - Is God unjust in bringing wrath on those who break his law?
 - Are Jews morally superior to Gentiles in God's sight?

- Should Christians sin more so they can be forgiven more?
 - Should Christians sin because they are not under law but grace?
6. Although covering much of the same ground, **Romans is irenic** compared to the polemic of Galatians. Paul is writing in the calm certainty that the struggle against the Judaisers had largely been won.
7. The **vocabulary of Romans is rich** in theological terms: sin, righteousness, wrath, death, law, faith, etc.

Outline of contents

1:1-15	Introduction
1:16-17	Salvation as revelation of God's righteousness
1:18 - 3:20	All men, both Jew and Gentile, lack this righteousness
3:21 - 5:21	God graciously provides it through the death of Jesus
6:1 - 8:39	This righteousness transforms the believer, despite the resistance of the flesh and sin
9:1 - 11:36	God's righteousness with respect to Israel's history and role in salvation
12:1 - 15:13	The responsibility of the justified (righteous) man to bear witness through transformed living: political, social and fraternal

Conclusion

The Soteriological epistles of Paul provide us with a rich insight into how the apostle understood the divine plan of Salvation for Creation as outworked through Jesus the Jewish Messiah. In them we see that the scope of God's redemptive dealings included not only human beings but the Creation as a whole and that all are reconciled to God in and through Christ.

Memory Verse

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (NIV)

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation”.