

Period of Continued Expansion

A survey paper on the New Testament (Includes book summaries, chapter titles and five eternal truths)

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Part 2 - Summary

(Acts 18:23-28:31)

To fully appreciate the impact of the early Christian church, it is helpful to remember the events leading up to its eventual **expansion**, beginning with the departure of *Yeshua*--Jesus, the promised *Mashiach*--Messiah, and the subsequent entrance of His promised *Ruach HaKodesh*--Holy Spirit, as recorded in the book of Acts (Stern JNT 380-381). Jesus called the Holy Spirit “Another” helper (Gk. “of the same kind“--literally, the Person of Jesus Christ, manifested in Spirit--Dr. James F. Engle, Senior Pastor, Immanuel Baptist Church, Wausau, WI), and following His ascension, Luke tells us He made His presence known in a powerful way, through graphic demonstration of both light and sound (Acts 2:1-4) (Stern JNT 381-382).

This special day, traditionally called *Shavu'ot*--Pentecost, would also be pivotal in the life of Simon Peter, once merely a man of empty boasts (John 13:37), now miraculously transformed into God’s first, great spokesperson for Christ (Acts 2:14-40; 3:11-26; 4:8-20) (Stern JNT 382). Empowered by the Holy Spirit, he would turn and confront the same Jews to which, just days ago, he swore a stern denial of Christ (John 18:25). Even more so now, having received power from the Spirit, Peter would later see his own Jewish worldview shaken, when through a vision from God, he is instrumental in seeing the first outpouring of the Holy Spirit among the *Goyim*--Gentiles (Acts 10:1-35) (Stern JNT 380).

The results of the Holy Spirit’s work in the first days of the Church’s **establishment** were quite evident, as many Jews, and a few Gentiles believed (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14; 6:7). Moments of miraculous healings--even a supernatural “prison break”--became springboards into opportunities for the apostles to share the Gospel of salvation, found in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:1-10; 5:14-16, 19-26; 8:7).

This outreach was no less significant as Christ’s work within His church, as through His Spirit, He began to teach and shape his fellowship of infant believers (Acts 4:13; 5:1-11; 6:1-6; 15:1-29) (Marty 69). Furthermore, the writing of the first epistle, called for faith demonstrated with outward action (Zodhiates 1421).

It comes as no surprise then, as the church began to grow, Jesus’ prediction, as recorded in Matthew’s Gospel, chapter ten, verse thirty-four, would also soon come to pass

in the form of persecution (Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-42). Although warned not to do so by one of their own, the Jewish establishment increased its opposition to Christ's message, eventually resulting in the further **extension** of the Church, beginning with the killing of the first Christian martyr, Stephen (5:33-42; 7:54-8:4) (Stern JNT 382).

Among those now scattered into the outer regions around *Yerushalayim*--Jerusalem, "preaching," Philip the apostle, following the Spirit in leading a traveling official to faith in Christ, may have been used to plant the first church in Ethiopia, nearly 1,600 miles from Jerusalem! (Acts 8:4a, 26-39) (Timeanddate.com).

However, the most pivotal moment in the growth of Christ's church, resulting in an even wider geographic spread, and eventual **expansion** of the Gospel from Jews to Gentiles, began with the dramatic conversion of Jewish zealot and terrorist to followers of Jesus, *Sha'ul*--Saul (Acts 9:1-19) (Stern JNT 382).

Saul--later renamed Paul--once an enemy of Christ, is transformed by Jesus himself into a charismatic missionary, and together with Barnabas, close brother and fellow worker, begins preaching and ministering in the region of Judea, in Cyprus, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, an Lystra, causing either "revival" or "riot," wherever he goes (Acts 13-14:20). Case in point, while in Lystra, Paul's preaching is met with the townspeople stoning him, dragging his body "outside the city," leaving him for dead (Acts 14:19). The Holy Spirit intervenes, however, and Paul is miraculously revived, getting up only to head himself right back into the city! (Acts 14:20)

This unbridled tenacity is evidenced in Paul's letter to the churches in Galatia, where he encourages them to trust Christ's finished work of grace to rescue them from the shackles of legalism (Marty 133). In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul delivers much needed hope, in the midst of intense persecution, while clarifying future events in God's eternal timeline, those leading up to Jesus' return to Earth (Marty 143, 147).

He is passionate, which here, and in the case of his chastisement of Peter is seen as a advantage, and perhaps even as a catalyst for growth (Gal. 2:11-21). However, in a disagreement with Barnabas, passionate argument divides best friends (Acts 15:36-40) (Stern JNTC 280). The two men part ways; Paul goes south with Silas, toward the sea, Barnabas, west, with John Mark, toward Syria (Acts 15:39-40). What results is even greater spread of the Gospel of Christ by Paul into Europe (Marty 128).

Brought soon back north, by a vision, Paul's party is jailed in Philippi, only to be set free in a miraculous earthquake, bringing the jailer to salvation (Acts 16:31-34). Paul then travels south to Athens, and into Corinth, where his anger explodes, declaring he will now "go to the Gentiles," exclusively, and preach Christ (Acts 17:16-18:6).

Instructed by the Lord, he remains in Corinth another year, as there a small group of Christ followers begins to form (Acts 18:8). Then, taking with him newfound friends, Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, Paul's party sets sail east into Ephesus, where Paul is led to make, apparently without success, what might be called a "last ditch effort" to reason "with the Jews," (Acts 18:18-19). Paul, however, encouraged by some well-timed news of new Christians living in Italy, responds by writing his letter to the Roman church (Marty 173).

Soon, Paul grows weary of arguing (or perhaps grows a bit homesick), declining the Jews' invitation to remain and talk more with them in Ephesus. Bidding farewell to his friends, he sets sail for the long journey to Judea, to arrive some time later, back in Antioch (Acts 18:20-22). He takes what seems to be some needed "time off", before the Holy Spirit directs him north, into Galatia and Phrygia, perhaps making good on his promise to visit the churches there (Acts 18:23).

"Meanwhile," Luke records, back in Ephesus, Priscilla and Aquila are introduced to an outspoken convert of John the Baptist, named Apollos (Acts 18:24-25). Desiring to bring his faith to completion, they invite him "into their home," leading him to a greater understanding of God in Christ (Acts 18:26). Soon, he is led to sail west, into Achaia, and this new charismatic speaker continues where Paul left off, winning his debates with Jewish scholars, "proving...that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:27-28).

While Apollos' western ministry moves him into the marketplace of Corinth, Paul's journey west brings him back into Ephesus, where the Spirit finishes His work in the life of some believers living there. Moving them from mere "repentance," to faith in the filling of Jesus Christ, marvelous signs are unleashed (Acts 19:1-7).

Paul then spends two years in Ephesus, witnessing, among other things, the conversion of Epaphras, future pastor of the church in Colossae (Marty 129). It is believed that during this time, hearing some disturbing news from the believers across the

sea (concerning factions and divisions, confusion and immorality), he writes his first letter to the church at Corinth (et. al. 153-171).

While in Ephesus, we are told that Paul's ministry is a dynamic one. In fact, it is from here, the Gospel begins spreading into all of Asia (Marty 129). The Holy Spirit's work is such that "even handkerchiefs and aprons that...[touch Paul are]...taken to the sick...[who are then]...cured" (Acts 19:11-12). So impressed by this, Luke writes, that "some Jews" soon try to imitate the miracles they'd witnessed in Paul, attempting even to "invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed" (Acts 19:13).

It seems all of this is being done in an attempt to discredit Paul by proving power apart from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. But God "cannot be mocked" (Gal. 6:7), and as shown with the "seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish high priest," the results can prove painful, if somewhat comical:

"They [said], 'In the name of the Lord Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out.'...the evil spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and I know about Paul, but who are you?' Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding." (Acts 19:13-16)

The revival which occurs as a result of this incident eventually leads to rioting among the Ephesian silversmiths who, because of the growing popularity of Christianity, begin losing money over the sale of their idols (These idols, cast in the image of the Greek goddess of fertility, Artemis, were believed to be the channel through which one's business would prosper--Marty 129) (Acts 19:23-27).

Feeling their livelihood threatened, they incite the crowds against Paul. Unable to locate him (he had left the city to minister in the surrounding countryside--Acts 19:21), the crowd, now angry enough to kill, grabs instead two of his "traveling companions from Macedonia," (Acts 19:29). Paul, upon hearing this, no doubt "fired up" in his zeal, wants to rush to the aid of his friends, but is entreated not to do so, protected instead by "the disciples" living in Ephesus (Acts 19:30). The fracas is soon ended peacefully through the intervention of a city official, who entreats the silversmiths to instead settle any grievances they may have with Paul in court (Acts 19:35-41).

This crisis ended, having already sent two of his traveling party ahead of him (Timothy and Erastus), the Holy Spirit leads Paul to leave port for Macedonia, his sights set now on Jerusalem, and Rome (Acts 19:21). Arriving in Greece, he ministers there “three months,” accompanied by what might be called an association of pastors from many regions of the Gentile world (Acts 20:4). Intending to travel south, toward Jerusalem, Paul (upon hearing of a “plot against him”) is led instead north, as he’d originally planned (Acts 20:3).

As Paul’s remaining party makes its way up the coast toward Philippi, Luke writes that Timothy, and the other “pastors,” are requested to sail ahead of Paul, returning back into Asia, to wait for him in Troas (Acts 20:5). While in Philippi, Paul writes his second letter to the Corinthian church, explaining why he had failed to return to them, as he’d originally intended:

“I call God as my witness that it was in order to spare you that I did not return to...[you].” (2 Corinthians 1:23)

In this letter, Paul goes on to say it was so that they might be encouraged by him that he didn’t return (it is uncertain as to what issue may have previously transpired between them), and “that [they] would all share [his] joy” (2 Cor. 2:3) (Marty 168).

Five days after sailing from Philippi, Paul’s team arrives to join the others “in Troas,” located off the coast of Mysia, where a “long-winded” sermon by Paul results in a young man’s fatal, three-story fall from the window where he was seated. In an obvious show of unhindered compassion, Paul throws “himself on the young man and [puts] his arms around him,” the Spirit returning life to the boy’s limp body (Acts 20:7-12).

Jerusalem now looming closer and closer in his mind, Paul may have needed some time alone, choosing to walk, rather than sail with his brethren south some miles, from Troas to Assos (Acts 20:13). Joining them in Assos, we are told they then continue south, along the coast of Asia, stopping in the city of Miletus, in order for Paul to bid a final, tearful farewell to the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:17-38).

Setting sail once more, and only stopping in Patara only long enough to change vessels, Paul’s party continues south, across the expansive Mediterranean (Acts 21:2). When they are next just over halfway mark, “passing to the south of” the island of Cyprus, is it fair to wonder if Paul is remembering his brother, Barnabas and John Mark?

This had been his friends' next intended destination, after their heated disagreement and parting...it must have seemed like so long ago for Paul (Acts 15:39; 21:3).

Finally, the long wait over, the ship makes port at Caesarea, where the road to Jerusalem soon awaits. There, while staying with "Philip the evangelist" (not the apostle Philip), a man named Agabus prophesies Paul's impending imprisonment in Jerusalem, and Paul is begged by all "not to go" (Acts 21:7-12). Paul answers them all with firm assurance; he is ready to die there for Christ, if necessary (Acts 21:13).

Paul then leads his group east toward Jerusalem, staying--perhaps briefly--in the home of a man "from Cyprus and one of the early disciples" (Acts 21:15-16). In hearing the name "Cyprus" once again, does Paul see Barnabas' face? Maybe he wishes now he could bid a final farewell to this man who might have been one of his closest friends.

As Paul finally arrives in Jerusalem, he is given a warm greeting by the Jewish brothers there (Acts 21:17). His report of the progress made "among the Gentiles through his ministry" is met with praise, mixed with concern about rumors circulating that he is responsible for turning Jews away from some time-honored traditions (Acts 21:21).

Specifically, the accusation is that "he was a traitor to the Jewish people...[teaching]...Jews...to cease functioning as Jews"--to "apostatize" themselves! (Stern JNTC 302-303) Paul doesn't seem to take verbal issue with this, but instead agrees to comply with the advice of the brothers, participating in a public act of ceremonial purification, in order to "head off a violent confrontation with the 'zealots,' and their belief in the false rumor" (Stern JNTC 304).

Unfortunately, this attempt to avoid trouble fails, and the following day, as Paul is discovered in the temple, he is shouted at and dragged out; nearly beaten to death, before a battalion of Roman soldiers intervenes, pulling him to safety (Acts 21:27-36). With the permission of the commander of the guard, Claudius Lysias, Paul attempts to reason with the crowd, defending his innocence, but no sooner does he mention Christ's call on him to the Gentiles, and the crowd is once more stirred-up against him (Acts 21:37-22:22).

The Roman commander removes Paul, and perhaps in an effort to appease the crowds (or because he may still think Paul "must be a dangerous criminal...[and is]...determined [then] to whip the truth out of him"--Stern JNTC 308) prepares to have Paul "flogged" (Acts 22:24). However, grace once more intervenes, and Paul claims his

Roman citizenship, and his right to a fair trial, thereby escaping torture, just moments before the whip is to come screaming down upon his bare skin (Acts 22:25-29).

Commander Lysias then arranges an audience with what he understands is Paul's governing, religious body (the Sanhedrin), in an effort to find out "exactly why Paul [is] being accused [of] by the Jews" (Acts 22:30). Paul begins to address the men gathered, when Ananias, the high priest, has him struck "on the mouth," to which Paul immediately retorts:

"God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" (Acts 23:3)

When he is chastised by some gathered near to him, and informed he has just insulted the high priest, Paul's response is no doubt sarcastic, when he confesses, "I didn't realize that he was the high priest" (Acts 23:5). It is here, as with the heroes of the *Tanakh*--Old Testament, that we see Paul's "failings are reported faithfully along with [his] virtues," proving by his example it is God's grace, not our own effort, which leads to righteousness; he has "not yet achieved the goal, as he himself admits" (Stern JNTC 308).

Luke then records that, in order to divert attention off himself, Paul then succeeds in igniting a dispute between the *P'rushim*--Pharisees and the *Tzadok*--Sadducees, over their dispute concerning the resurrection. He escapes, with the help of Lysias' men (Acts 23:6-10). Paul then is visited, the next night, by the resurrected Jesus Christ, who assures him that just as he has "testified about [him] in Jerusalem, so [he] must also testify in Rome" (Acts 23:11). In a series of events, which includes the uncovering of some Jewish zealots' vow to kill Paul, and commander Lysias' confusion as to deciding Paul's guilt or fate, Paul is delivered back west to the coast, and Caesarea, along with a letter from the commander, addressed to governor Felix (Acts 23:12-35). About 1 week later, Paul, and his accusers are standing before the Governor. A lawyer, appointed by the Jewish leaders, accuses Paul of desecrating the temple and of rioting. Paul then defends himself, and states his purpose was to merely participate in a rite of purification, when he was pulled out of the temple, and wrongfully accused of a disturbance; he adds that all his accusers are not even present at this hearing (Acts 24:1-21).

Putting them all off until “Lysias the commander comes,” Felix then dismisses everyone, but then “several days later,” together with his Jewish wife, Drusilla, Felix again listens to Paul. It isn’t until Paul speaks specifically about virtues of the Christian faith that, in fear, Felix interrupts Paul, having him then returned to prison, stating he will send for him when he finds “it convenient” for him to do so (Acts 24:24-25). Felix never seems to tire of hearing Paul “talk,” as he “[sends] for him frequently.” But because he fails to receive his desired bribe from Paul, and because he “[wants] to grant a favor to the Jews, [Felix leaves] Paul in prison” for two years, succeeded by Porcius Festus (Acts 24:26-27).

Festus learns of Paul through Jewish zealots, while visiting Jerusalem. In yet another attempt to ambush Paul to kill him, with deceit they plead with Festus to have Paul “transferred to Jerusalem” (Acts 25:1-3). Unaware of all the “particulars,” perhaps desiring to gain their favor, yet wishing to remain neutral, Festus puts the matter back on them, stating they will have to travel south, to Caesarea, there to confront Paul (Acts 25:4-5).

Almost two weeks later, Paul appears before Festus, his accusers faithfully falsifying witness against him; he declares his innocence (Acts 25:6-8). Paul then refuses Festus’ offer of extradition back to Jerusalem, appealing instead to the justice of Caesar, to which Festus, after brief discussion with his advisors, grants Paul’s request:

“You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!” (Acts 25:10-12)

More than two years from the time Paul re-entered Jerusalem, perhaps as many as five or more years since he and Barnabas had parted ways, Paul now appeared before the one man who stood between him and Rome: King Herod Agrippa II (Marty 18). The King, together with his wife, Bernice, while visiting Festus in Caesarea, agree to grant audience with Paul (Acts 25:13-23).

Festus introduces Paul as having “done nothing deserving of death,” but the Jewish outrage about him has combined to create, in Festus, a quandary as to what crime he should then be charged, in preparation for his transfer to Rome (Acts 25:24-27). The King then motions for Paul to speak, giving Paul now the opportunity, since this isn’t a “judicial” trial before Agrippa (he’s already appealed to Caesar), to “proclaim the Gospel to yet another kind of audience, the ruling elite” (Acts 26:1-23) (Stern JNTC 314-315).

The reaction is mixed. Festus, appealing perhaps to Paul as a kindred intellect, shouts, “Your great learning is driving you insane,” while Agrippa almost laughingly chortles, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?” (Acts 26:24, 28). Luke records neither governing party found Paul worthy of death, or perhaps even imprisonment. However, because he had appealed to Caesar’s justice, to Caesar he would go! (Acts 26:30-32). After an undetermined time, Paul, together with “some other prisoners,” boards a ship, bound for Rome (Acts 27:1-2). As he does so, it is perhaps fair to assume his heart pounds now at the anticipation of what awaits him, yet at the same time, his spirit is also at peace.

Upon reaching Sidon, Paul is allowed to visit one last time with friends, before embarking on the long journey north, across the Mediterranean. The sky begins to grow dark, the waves are getting choppy, and there is a low crackle of thunder somewhere off in the distance...he spies Cyprus off the port bow (Acts 27:3-4). Perhaps he takes a moment to remember Barnabas, Timothy, Priscilla and Apollos, as the ship enters the harbor, at Myra (Acts 27:5). The wind is increasing, but the dark clouds have disappeared, at least for the moment. Paul, together with other prisoners and cargo, connect to another vessel for the remainder of the trip. In the face of unfavorable winds encountered at Cnidus, where the Mediterranean meets the Aegean Sea, the ship changes course, due south, to Crete, stopping briefly in Fair Havens (Acts 27:5-8). Against Paul’s advice not to continue in the intensifying weather, the supervising centurion, Julius, sets sail (Acts 27:9-11).

It is interesting to note that, on a map, travel from the city of Fair Havens to the desired “next stop” of Phoenix, both of which are located “along the shore of Crete,” back then may have been only a day’s journey, if that (Acts 27:13) (Zodhiates, Map: “Paul’s Missionary Journeys“). However, “gentle” winds quickly turn “hurricane force,” the dark skies returning, this time tossing ship and cargo high, then low, as in some menacingly-giant “see-saw,” forcing the crew to do everything it can to try and keep it afloat! Hope is dying, as they spin helplessly out-of-control, due south (Acts 27:13-20). In the midst of terrifying desperation, the Lord speaks encouragement to the crew through Paul, assuring them that, although Paul warned them not to weigh anchor, because God’s plan is for him to reach Rome, “not one of [them] will be lost” (Acts 27:21-26).

The storm pounds on for two weeks straight. At one point, it is thought land is near, and depth measurements are taken. No land can be seen, but erratic measurement readings spook the crew into lowing some anchors, in order to try and avoid rocks (Acts 27:27-29). Finally, through Paul's stern confidence in God's purpose, and the centurion's change of confidence in Paul's leadership, they arrive safely on land, having shipwrecked off the coast of the tiny island of Malta (Acts 27:30-28:1).

Through the guidance and protection of the Holy Spirit, Paul is now three-fourths the way to Rome; they choose to remain with the friendly natives of Malta for three months, before departing (Acts 28:11). During that time, the Spirit's power is manifest again as, to the amazement of the island inhabitants, Paul is unharmed by a deadly-poisonous snakebite, while later, the father of Publius, chief official on the island, is miraculously healed. Many sick from the island are then brought to Paul (Acts 28:3-9).

Catching a ride on an "Alexandrian ship," which had made port during the winter, Paul's party, now blessed with supplies given by the grateful inhabitants of the island, sets sail, arriving in Syracuse, a city off the south-east coast of Sicily (Acts 28:11-12). Luke records they are three days, before sailing north, arriving "at Rhegium," located on the "toe" of Italy. Spending the night there, the crew heads north once more, visiting a week with "some brothers" in Puteoli (Acts 28:10-13). Puteoli, according to David H. Stern, in his Jewish New Testament Commentary, was a city having "a strong colony of Jews," and he says it isn't "surprising that some of them were Messianic" Jews, having accepted Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah and Lord (Stern JNTC 321).

Traveling then up the coast, we aren't told specifically, but it might be safely assumed Paul and party also visits with other Christian family, in the Forum of Appius, and in Three Taverns, as upon arriving in Rome, "the brothers there...[travel]...to meet [them]" (Acts 28:14-15).

During his first days in Rome, Paul lives under "house arrest," but is allowed certain privileges (no doubt arising from his good standing, while sailing under the watch care of Julius, the centurion), such as the assembling of Jewish leaders, to tell them of Christ, and of the events leading up to his arrival (Acts 28:16-23). Stern writes that Paul knew many of these leaders very well, and from their comments to him it is obvious "they knew very little about the Gospel;" the Roman congregation of believers "had apparently

not done much to evangelize the 10,000 or more Jews living in Rome...or they had tried but been ineffective” (Acts 28:21-22) (Stern JNTC 322). Stern goes on to add that this meeting most likely would’ve been a very “unique” one, as Rome was at this time considered “the capital of the world,” and Paul’s reputation as “the world’s leading evangelist,” would’ve drawn many to hear “about Messianic Judaism” (Stern JNTC 322). As would be expected, reactions are divided. “Some were convinced,” while “others” were not. Those who thought of leaving the meeting do so at the moment Paul begins quoting messianic prophecy from Isaiah, claiming the Holy Spirit as the original source (Acts 28:24-28).

We’re told Paul continues preaching and speaking “boldly and without hindrance” in Rome “for two whole years,” taking time also to send letters of encouragement and instruction that, through the Spirit of Christ, he helped to plant and lead: Ephesus, Colosse, and Philippi (Acts 28:30-31). During this time, he stays “in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him” (Acts 28:30). Later, when one of those visitors, Onesimus (a convert who later becomes very “useful” to Paul), is discovered to be a runaway slave, Paul sends him back with a personal letter to his master, Philemon (who came to Christ as a result of Paul’s ministry), encouraging forgiveness and restoration.

In conclusion, through the periods of the early church’s establishment, extension, and expansion, the work of the Holy Spirit showed the sovereign, mysterious, and complete love of the Father. Jesus Christ, his truth spoken to and now through his apostles, made His church a permanent structure on the horizon of history. Paul, like so many of the pioneers in the early church, is eventually executed, but with the foundation laid, and the reach of the church solidified, the work of Jesus Christ through the person of the Holy Spirit would soon bring **consolidation**, His church continuing to grow. Through increased persecution, lives would be changed forever. Moreover, with the awesome *revelation* of Jesus to the apostle John, all eyes would now be turned upward, in hopeful expectation of His triumphal return to Earth...

...such as we do, even today.

E’en so, come Lord!

Book Summaries

I Corinthians

Author: The apostle Paul*

Date: approx. 55 A.D.*

Audience: Messianic Jews in Corinth+

Place of Writing: Ephesus*

Theme: Believers Are The Temple Of God*

Purpose: To correct worldly conduct & instruct on matters of faith and practice

Summary of Content:

In teaching this congregation, plagued on all sides by immorality, both from without and within, Paul gives practical guidelines on holy living in an unholy world (Marty 155). He reminds them that God's truth is indeed "foolishness" to those who are spiritually dead (1:18). In doing so, he zeros-in on some issues of division among the believers: sexual immorality, licentiousness, and disunity (1:10-6:20).

A foolish brother, openly involved in an unholy relationship (no doubt influenced by the decadence of "Aphroditian" practices), is the cause of believers' further distancing from God, and the church, for the sake of its spiritual health, is commanded to "expel" him (5:1-13) (Marty 129). He encourages the church not to be the fool weak ones follow, and to do "everything as unto the Lord" (8-10:31), to be genuine in any crowd (9:19-27), and to be mindful of truth, using examples of historical disobedience as lessons for us (10:1-22).

Paul states he knows his place in all this, as a servant of Christ, stating humbly, and without "eloquence" neither he nor anyone else owns any wisdom apart from the Spirit (vs. 2:6-16). He clarifies that the "kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power" (vs. 4:20), and asks, when all is said and done, will our acts here on Earth be temporary or everlasting, precious gold, or mere "straw" (vs. 3:13-15).

He also takes time to clarify some questions posed him by church members on issues such as those relating to marriage myths, and that as we test our motives, we should remain planted where God has placed us; married or single (7:1-39).

Some cultural ordinances in the church are explored, such as the role and appearance of women in the church (11:1-16; 14:34-35), and Paul also gives powerful defense to love as the universal tie to all spiritual gifts (13:1-13). Focusing on the gifts of prophecy and the speaking of other tongues, Paul illustrates the priority of the former over the latter (14:1-25, 35-40).

In what has been called one of the "most important chapters in the Bible," defending as our hope and foundation of our faith, the reality of Jesus' resurrection; our "perishable" lives to be raised someday "imperishable," to live forever alive in Christ! (15:1-58).

He tells of his plans to visit, and gives instructions for the giving to the church at Jerusalem, closing by encouraging them to "stand firm," in God's love. Whoever doesn't love God, Paul says is to be cursed (16:1-22). He ends with a benediction of grace in the name of Jesus (16:23-24).

* Marty 154-155

+Zodhiates 1332

II Corinthians

Author: The Apostle Paul*

Date: approx. 56 A.D.*

Audience: Messianic Jews in Corinth*

Place of Writing: Undetermined location in Macedonia*

Theme: The Glory Of The Ministry Under The New Covenant*

Purpose: To assure Paul's concern was genuine & to defend his apostleship*

Summary of Content:

It has been debated whether this is truly the second of two letters written by Paul, or whether there were three, perhaps even four letters altogether (Marty 165). Whatever the case, "some serious problems" remained in "the church at Corinth, including a faction in the congregation who denied that Paul was truly an apostle of Jesus (Zodhaites 1350).

Unlike his other letters, this one is painfully personal, and as such, it is more difficult to follow his train of thought, each chastisement often standing alone, as its own idea. Much like the concept that we usually are more passionate, and can be angrier with family than with others, this letter gives us a window into Paul's genuine love for this Church, and the level of his hurt at the attacks against his credibility as an apostle (1:12-2:4; 3:1-6; 5:11-21; 6:3-13; 11:1-12:21) (Marty 168). In no uncertain terms, Paul warns against those who would come to them with some other Jesus or Spirit, than the one which through the apostles' teaching, they have already learned (11:1-15).

He reminds them, more sternly, of the sinful world in which they live, and as "jars of clay," although they are often "crushed," the work of "death" within Christ's workers, like Paul, brings "life" to them, giving them a bold hope in freedom found in the Holy Spirit (3:7-4:1-18). This freedom he is compelled by love to speak about, is found when we walk and fight by faith, not by "sight" (5:1-10, 14; 10:1-11). This ability to walk exclusively by faith in Christ is only available--as it has been said--for a *limited time only*, meaning "today," and from which the "perfecting" of their "holiness" (apart from partnership with the world) would bring joy to Paul, which he states he has already bragged about to Titus (6:1-2, 14-18; 7:1-16).

Using Macedonian believers as an example, Paul urges the Corinthians to "bring also to completion" their generosity in giving, since God has made them "rich" in order to be generous; guidelines for the preparation for their gift are also prescribed (8:1-9:15).

If there is to be boasting of any kind, by Paul's own testimony, it is to be done ONLY "in the Lord," according to OUR weaknesses, demonstrating the miraculous strength we find in Christ alone (10:1-18).

Finally, before closing in a benediction of "grace," we see Paul giving final warning against disobedience, and the harboring of unrepentant sin, as he urges this congregation to examine themselves, as a test of genuine evidence of their faith in Jesus Christ (12:20-13:1-14).

* Marty 165

Romans

Author: The Apostle Paul*

Date: approx. 58-59 A.D.+

Audience: “Church at Rome“*
“*“

Place of Writing: Ephesus

Theme: “The Revelation Of A ‘Righteousness From God’ In The Gospel“*
“*“

Purpose: Teaching basic doctrines of salvation and benefits of Jewish doubt to Gentiles+

Summary of Content:

After reviewing the apostles’ roots through Christ, and upon expressing his longing to visit them in Rome, Paul launches in, full-throttle with first the **bad** news of sin, revealed through the law (1:1-32). By dispelling the myth that one is considered “Jewish” ritualistically, and in expounding on death and the judgment of the Law, he declares there is “none righteous;” all have fallen short of God’s standard of holiness, found in Christ (2:1-29; 3:9-31).

The **good** news is that God is immune to faithlessness, and has proven so in his calling and upholding of Abraham’s faith, which is also made real to us in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (3:1-8; 4:1-25). This is reason for great joy, as through “one man,” Jesus Christ, life, not death has reconciled us; we are “baptized into His death,” raised as slaves to righteousness, released from the Law, no longer condemned, grateful for God’s gift of “eternal life,” which equips us in our spiritual battle, as revealed in us by the Law (5:1-8:17). While suffering in battle, we are encouraged, knowing that in evidences seen around us in nature, the Holy Spirit’s intercession for us, the Father’s purpose for us, and the Son’s heavenly advocacy to us, we are in all ways, at all times, and under all conditions “more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (8:18-39).

As such, we are not to revel in this confidence to the extent that we forget our place as God’s adopted children to his chosen nation, Israel (9:1-33; 11:11-24). Although He is working out his loving discipline on them, His final plan is that they WILL be saved, and we, as obedient “branches,” are to meet their misguided zeal, leading them to this belief, in order that they, too, like us, would find mercy through Christ (10:1-21; 11:25-36).

Finally, as we are all part of Christ, we are to relate to, and accept all believers, strong and weak, in love, placing in no one’s path a “stumbling block” to his/her walk (12:1-21; 14:1-23). This command also applies globally to the unbelieving world around us (in how we treat our “neighbor,” and our ethical conduct toward those in governmental authority), that through our example, they might come to know and believe (12:14-13:14). As he closes, Paul speaks of how he is driven to preach to the Gentiles, gives specific requests for special greetings, warns against those who would “cause divisions” amongst church members, and repeats his plans to visit Rome, before ending in a foundational proclamation in the establishment and revelation found in Jesus Christ (15:14-16:27).

* Marty 173

+Zodhiates 1313

Ephesians

Author: The Apostle Paul*

Date: approx. 60 A.D.+

Audience: Believers in the church at Ephesus*

Place of Writing: Rome

Theme: The Church Is The Body Of Christ

Purpose: To “stress doctrine and give instruction in practical Christian duties”+

Summary of Content:

In his book, *Surveying the New Testament*, Dr. William Marty states that the “problem in Ephesus was a compound fracture of belief and behavior,” and much like a surgeon, Paul proceeds to sew together the delicate seams of “doctrine and duty” (Marty 183). He does so first by praising our hope in Christ, giving thanks and offering a prayer for the Church’s enlightenment (1:3-23).

Reminding them we are all dead before Christ, we have all been saved through His infinite grace, and are now part of God’s family: both of the Jew and the Gentile (2:1-22). He declares this as the basis for his mission to the Gentiles, and offers a prayer for the Ephesian believers (3:1-21).

As one body of believers, Paul states that spiritual gifts were given each one in order to unify us all, and that in putting off the old “self,” we will mature and become “imitators of God” (4:1-5:2). As we submit to one another in purity (wives, husbands, children, slaves), we will be able to stand strong, clad in the “armor of God” (5:3-6:20).

Paul closes with “peace” to them, announcing the coming of his “faithful servant,” Tychicus, to update them on Paul’s health and ministry, that they may be encouraged (6:21-24).

* Marty 184

+Zodhiates 1368

Philippians

Author: The Apostle Paul*

Date: “Shortly after 60 A.D.”+

Audience: Believers in the church at Philippi+

Place of Writing: Rome

Theme: The Joyful Christian Life Amidst Suffering*

Purpose: Encouragement that Christ “enables people to serve Him” all life long+

Summary of Content:

In encouraging them to “stand firm in one spirit,” Paul writes that, regardless of life or death, Christ is always preached through him; knowing their prayers are always going up to the Father on his behalf, gives him a longing affection for them (1:1-30).

Encouraged to imitate humility found in Jesus Christ, the Philippians are instructed to “do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit,” without complaining, knowing it is God “who works in” them, bringing about His purpose (2:1-18). In sending back to them both Timothy and Epaphroditus, commended by Paul, he hopes these two men might inspire them (they had heard Epaphroditus was deathly ill), while they in turn would return good news to Paul (2:19-30).

Resolving that since our “citizenship” is in Heaven, Paul tells us to “press on,” toward our goal, found in Jesus Christ, taking no confidence in our own talents or accomplishments (3:1-4:1).

He makes a personal plea for peace between “Euodia and...Syntyche,” two women having “contended” beside Paul, now were in disagreement with each other (4:2-3).

Finally, in demonstrating his gratefulness for the gifts he’d received from them, he gives them a charge to think of anything true...noble...right...pure...lovely...admirable...
...excellent...and praiseworthy, as they “rejoice in the Lord always.” “Petition with thanksgiving,” he says, is key in remaining free from anxiety (4:4-20).

Perhaps he grins as he closes by telling them not only “the saints” send them greetings, but also “those who belong to Caesar’s household,” proving that, even in the lion’s den, through Christ, there is always hope (4:21-23).

* Marty 199-200
+Zodhiates 1375

Philemon

Author: The Apostle Paul*

Date: approx. 60 A.D.+

Audience: Philemon, a resident, and possible lead elder in the church at Colossae*

Place of Writing: Rome*

Theme: Picture Of Forgiveness*

Purpose: Do what is right, not under compulsion, but for “right’s sake” alone

Summary of Content:

Paul begins by greeting Philemon, encouraged by reports of Philemon’s “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and [his] love for all the saints” (1-7).

Onesimus, a runaway slave, is said to have assisted Paul, during his imprisonment in Rome, “useless” as Philemon’s runaway slave, but through Christ’s work in his life, now made “useful” to both Paul and Philemon (8-11).

Paul tells Philemon that, in “strict accordance” with the requirements of Hebraic law regarding fugitives, he was sending Onesimus back to him, because although he enjoyed his help, he knew it an issue of integrity to keep him without permission from Philemon (12-14). Paul then urges Philemon, not as a slave master, but as a recent convert to Christ, to accept Onesimus, not as a slave or criminal, but instead as a “dear brother,” seeing the value God has built into him, by His work of grace in his life (15-16).

It would seem Onesimus may have stolen from Philemon, for Paul instructs Philemon to “charge” to him “anything” Onesimus might owe, adding right after--“you owe me your very self” (17-19). Perhaps Philemon owed his conversion to Paul’s ministry, and Paul was simply reminding him of Philemon’s own “restoration and rescue” from sin’s slavery.

Paul writes he has confidence Philemon will do the right thing, and requests he prepare a room for Paul, as he has plans to visit, according to Philemon’s prayers (20-22).

He closes with greetings from some fellow workers with him in Rome, leaving Philemon in a benediction of Christ’s grace, through His Spirit (23-25).

* Marty 206

+Zodhiates 1405

Colossians

Author: The Apostle Paul*

Date: approx 60 A.D.+

Audience: Believers in the church at Colossae

Place of Writing: Rome

Theme: “Christ Is The Preeminent And All Sufficient Head Of The Church”*

Purpose: “To refute the heretical teaching that was influencing the Colossian church”+

Summary of Content:

Paul opens with his endorsement of “the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up” for the Church, which has been made known to him, and to all his fellow workers in Rome (1:1-9).

He gives a prayer for their strengthening (1:10-12). Because of supreme and complete reconciliation found in Christ, Paul then says he has been commissioned “to present” to them the full Gospel of Christ, through God’s enabling power, which once was hidden, and now has been made “known among the Gentiles” (1:13-29).

Restating his desire that the Colossians be “strengthened” in faith, Paul’s desire is that they be able to resist “hollow and deceptive philosophy,” having “full riches of complete understanding,” found only in Jesus Christ (2:1-15). Moreover, he warns against the giving over of their freedom in Christ in exchange for legalistic, “self-imposed worship (2:16-23).

Having received a “new self,” Paul urges them to do all for Christ, prescribing for them godly roles for husbands, wives, children, slaves (employees), and masters (managers) (3:1-4:1).

Finally, devoted to prayer, believers are told to be “watchful and thankful,” considering always the needs of those proclaiming “the mystery of Christ;” Epaphras is used as an example of what it looks like to wrestle in prayer for others (4:2-13). Paul gives the names of fellow workers for which he gives greetings, closing by requesting the Colossians share this letter with the “church of the Laodiceans,” who in turn would share their letter with Colossae (4:10-17).

His last line ends in “grace,” to the Colossians, asking them to “remember” his “chains.”

* Marty 191

+Zodhiates 1405

5 Eternal Truths:

- 1. Colossians 3:23** *“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart”*
Perhaps this may have birthed the saying “a job well done is a job done well.” As a “reformed perfectionist,” I find here the comfort that, with God alone at the center, excellence will always be the outcome of any endeavor; He steers my passion.
- 2. Philippians 4:6-7** *“Do not be anxious about anything...”*
This is a tough one for me, especially with the “push” to get papers done, study for exams, run to work, prepare for PCM, etc. However, it is in remembering the entire verse--“...but in everything, by prayer and petition...”--I am calmed once more, able once more to crawl up into my Father’s loving lap, and rest.
- 3. Philemon 21** *“Confident...you will do even more than I ask”*
How difficult is it to believe the best in someone else? Upon first meeting them; pretty easy. How about after working around them for about a month or so? Well... I aspire daily (and I do mean DAILY) to do just that, by reminding myself of my own fractured faithfulness, and God’s perpetual patience with me.
- 4. Ephesians 4:14-16** *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth...”*
I have found it very interesting how, as I intentionally barrel straight through the fear in me to connect with others who, in some way or another, are “foreign” to me (position, race, religion, culture), I am able to actually “think” more clearly. My understanding comes quicker, and my discernment is sharpened; perhaps this is the drive toward unity which Paul refers to here.
- 5. Romans 8:18-39** *“Our present sufferings are not worth comparing...”*
In memorizing this argument, which ends with Paul’s declaration that “neither death nor life...” nor ANYTHING--period, can ever separate us from the love God has given us in Jesus Christ, I’ve discovered a secure system of “hedges” He’s provided us, in the midst of suffering: proof revealed in nature (18-22), proof revealed through our help in the Holy Spirit (23-27), proof revealed in the Father’s perfect plan for us (28-33), and proof revealed--most importantly--in the Son himself (34-35). This is why “in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.” Praise be to God!

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