

II. Paul's Epistles¹⁸⁰

A. Romans

Timeline



Author, Recipients, and Date

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome. He probably did this while he was in Corinth on his third missionary journey, in A.D. 57 (Acts 20:2–3).

Theme

In the cross of Christ, God judges sin and at the same time shows his saving mercy.

Purpose

Paul wrote Romans to unite the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome in the gospel. He also wanted the church in Rome to become the base of operations from which he could proclaim the gospel in Spain (15:22–24). The ultimate goal of preaching the gospel is the glory of God (11:33–36). Paul longs for the Gentiles to become obedient Christians for the sake of Christ's name (1:5).

Romans 1:16-17

¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

Key Themes

1. All people are sinners and need to be saved from their sin (1:18–3:20; 5:12–19).
TOTAL DEPRAVITY: Because of the Fall, every part of human nature is corrupted by sin so that people are unable to turn to God or do true good apart from his grace.
Romans 3:10,13: "None is righteous, no, not one . . . no one does good."
Romans 14:23: For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin.
2. The Mosaic law is good and holy, but only Christ can remove sin and overcome its power (2:12–29; 3:9–20; 5:20; 7:1–25; 9:30–10:8).
3. Through the righteousness of God, sin is judged and salvation is provided (3:21–26; 5:12–19; 6:1–10; 7:1–6; 8:1–4).

Romans 3:23-26

*²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had **passed over** former sins. ²⁶ It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be **just** and the **justifier** of the one who has faith in Jesus.*

Romans 4:8 "Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

JUSTIFICATION is the "Great Exchange": Jesus bears our sin. God declares us righteous by faith.

¹⁸⁰ The Student Study Bible.

Romans 5:18-19: ¹⁸ Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. ¹⁹ For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Romans 6:1-2: ¹ What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Romans 6:23: ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

4. With the coming of Jesus Christ, a new age of redemptive history has begun (1:1–7; 3:21–26; 5:1–8:39).

5. The atoning death of Jesus Christ is central to God's plan of salvation (3:21–26; 4:23–25; 5:6–11, 15–19; 6:1–10; 7:4–6; 8:1–4).

Romans 5:8

⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

6. Justification is by faith alone (1:16–4:25; 9:30–10:21).

Romans 4:8

⁸ "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Romans 10:9-10

⁹ because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved.

7. Those who are in Christ Jesus have a sure hope of future glory (5:1–8:39).

8. By the power of the Holy Spirit, those who have died with Christ live a new life (2:25–29; 6:1–7:6; 8:1–39). Ch. 8: Adopted; heirs with Christ; hope of future glory

Romans 8:1-2

¹ There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

9. God shows his **PROVIDENCE** by directing all things according to his wise and holy will for his glory and the good of his people

Romans 8:28: ²⁸ And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

10. God is sovereign in salvation. He works all things according to his plan (9:1–11:36).

11. God fulfills his promises to both Jews and Gentiles (1:18–4:25; 9:1–11:36; 14:1–15:13).

12. Because of God's grace, Christians should be morally pure, should show love to their neighbors, should be good citizens, and should welcome their fellow believers into fullest fellowship (12:1–15:7).

Romans 12:1-2

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Outline

1. The Gospel as the Revelation of God's Righteousness (1:1–17)
2. God's Righteousness in His Wrath against Sinners (1:18–3:20)
3. The Saving Righteousness of God (3:21–4:25)
4. Hope as a Result of Righteousness by Faith (5:1–8:39)
5. God's Righteousness to Israel and to the Gentiles (9:1–11:36)
6. God's Righteousness in Everyday Life (12:1–15:13)
7. The Extension of God's Righteousness through Paul's Mission (15:14–16:23)
8. Final Summary of the Gospel of God's Righteousness (16:25–27)

B. 1 Corinthians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian church in the spring of A.D. 53, 54, or 55. This was near the end of his three-year ministry in Ephesus. Altogether Paul wrote four letters to this church: (1) the previous letter mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9; (2) 1 Corinthians; (3) the tearful, severe letter mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:3–4; and (4) 2 Corinthians. Only 1 and 2 Corinthians have survived.

Theme

The Corinthian church, divided because of the arrogance of its more powerful members, should work together for the advancement of the gospel. They should repent of their rivalries, build up the faith of those who are weak, and witness effectively to unbelievers.

Purpose

Paul received an oral report and a letter from the Corinthian church. These revealed a church struggling with division, immorality, idolatry, and theological confusion. He wrote them this letter so that they would become a true dwelling place for God's Spirit (3:12, 16), stay faithful to the gospel, and be "guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1:8).

Key Themes

1. The church (and individuals in the church) is the dwelling place of God's Spirit. Thus, the people who make up the church should work for unity by building each other up.
1 Corinthians 3:16: ¹⁶ Do you not know that **you [plural]** are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in **you [plural]**?
Compare to **1 Corinthians 6:19:** ¹⁹ Or do you not know that **your [plural] body [singular]** is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom **you [singular]** have from God?
2. Christians should build up the church in four practical ways:
 - a. they should be sensitive to those with fragile faith (8:1–9:18; 10:28, 33).
 - b. they should win unbelievers to the faith (9:19–23; 10:27, 32–33).
 - c. they should conduct worship services in such a way that unbelievers might come to faith (14:16, 23–25).
 - d. their corporate worship should use spiritual gifts not out of personal pride, or for evaluating who has the better gift, but to build up the church (11:2–16; 12:12–30; 14:1–35).
3. Sexual relations form a union between man and woman as deep as the union of the believer with Christ. Therefore sexual activity should be confined to marriage (5:1–13; 6:12–20; 7:5, 9, 36).

4. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are important. Yet both are less important than personal trust in the gospel and living in the way God commands (1:14–17; 10:1–5; 11:17–34; 15:29–34). **Chapter 11 gives Paul's instructions for participating in the Lord's Supper.**

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 [compare to Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22]

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

5. The bodily resurrection of Jesus (and of his followers) from the dead is a key truth of the Christian faith (6:14; 15:1–58).

1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 51-53

⁴² So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. . . . ⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³ For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

6. Chapter 12: Excellent discussion of spiritual gifts given to all believers.

7. **ATONEMENT** (Christ's sacrifice covered the guilt of our sins so we could be reconciled to God)

1 Corinthians 15:3

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures.

Outline

1. Introduction to the Letter's Main Themes (1:1–9)
2. Divisions over Christian Preachers (1:10–4:21)
3. A Report of Sexual Immorality and Lawsuits (5:1–6:20)
4. Three Issues from the Corinthians' Letter (7:1–11:1)
5. Divisions over Corporate Worship (11:2–14:40)
6. The Futility of Faith If the Dead Are Not Raised (15:1–58)
7. The Collection for the Saints and Travel Plans (16:1–12)
8. Closing Admonitions and Greetings (16:13–24)

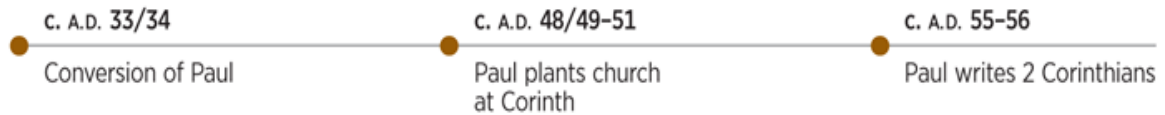
1 Corinthians 13:1-8. . . 13 THE LOVE CHAPTER

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ² And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³ If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant ⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶ it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never ends. . . .

¹³ So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

C. 2 Corinthians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia around A.D. 55/56. This was approximately a year after he wrote 1 Corinthians and a year before he wrote his letter to the Romans. This is the fourth letter he had written to the Corinthian church (in addition to 1 Corinthians, see the letters mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9 and 2 Cor. 2:3–4).

Theme

The central theme of 2 Corinthians is the relationship between suffering and the power of the Spirit in Paul's apostolic life, ministry, and message. Paul's opponents had questioned his motives and his personal courage. They argued that he had suffered too much to be a Spirit-filled apostle of the risen Christ. But Paul argues that his suffering is the means God uses to reveal his glory (1:3–4, 11, 20).

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, ⁴who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Purpose

Paul vindicates his apostolic ministry in order to (1) strengthen the faithful majority in Corinth (primarily chs. 1–7); (2) encourage them to contribute to the financial needs of other believers, as an expression of their repentance (primarily chs. 8–9); and (3) offer the rebellious minority in Corinth another chance to repent before he returns to judge those still rejecting him and his message (primarily chs. 10–13).

Key Themes

1. Endurance through difficulty and Christlike behavior are made possible by the grace of God and are modeled by Paul himself. These qualities are the greatest display of God's presence, power, and glory in this fallen world (1:12–14; 6:14–7:1; 12:7–10; 13:4).

2 Corinthians 12:7-10

*⁷So to keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, **a thorn was given me in the flesh**, a messenger of Satan to harass me, to keep me from becoming conceited. ⁸Three times I pleaded with the Lord about this, that it should leave me. ⁹But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. ¹⁰For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. **For when I am weak, then I am strong.***

2. Paul's suffering imitates the cross of Christ. Those who reject him because he suffers are "false apostles" and "servants of Satan" (11:13–15).
3. Paul is a servant of the new covenant (3:6). His ministry and message of the cross mediates the Spirit of the living God and God's righteousness to believers (3:3, 6–9; 5:14–15, 21).
4. The Spirit transforms believers into the image of God, which is seen in Christ. This new creation is characterized by God's righteousness. Believers therefore embody the new creation of the new covenant by living for the sake of others. This is made possible because believers are reconciled with God through the cross (3:18; 5:15, 17–21).

PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION – progressively becoming like Jesus (becoming holy in practice)

2 Corinthians 3:18

¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

2 Corinthians 5:17

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

5. Repentance expresses itself in holiness. This is a purity-producing love for God and his church and a unity-creating love for one's neighbor (6:14–7:1; chs. 8–9).

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

⁶ The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.

6. Christ, as Savior, is also the universal Judge. He will judge all people according to their deeds. The Spirit transforms those in whom he dwells as a guarantee of the "eternal weight of glory" to come for believers at the resurrection (1:22; 3:18; 5:5, 9–11).

2 Corinthians 4:16-18

¹⁶ So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, ¹⁸ as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

7. JUSTIFICATION (God bore our sins; God declared us righteous by faith)

2 Corinthians 5:21

²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Outline

1. Paul's Defense of His Ministry as an Apostle (1:1–7:16)
2. Paul's Appeal to the Repentant Church Regarding the Collection (8:1–9:15)
3. Paul's Appeal to the Rebellious Minority in Corinth (10:1–13:10)
4. Closing Greetings (13:11–14)

D. Galatians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote this letter about A.D. 48. The Galatians are probably believers in the churches of the southern region of the Roman province of Galatia. Paul is more critical of his audience here than in any of his other letters.

Theme

Christ's death has brought in the age of the new covenant (3:23–26; 4:4–5, 24). People do not have to become Jews or follow the outward ceremonies of the Mosaic law in order to be Christians (2:3, 11–12, 14; 4:10). To require these things denies the heart of the gospel, which is justification by faith alone and not by keeping the “works of the law” (2:16). In this new age, Christians are to live in the guidance and power of the Spirit (chs. 5–6).

Galatians 2:16,20

¹⁶ yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified. . . .

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Purpose

False teachers have convinced the Galatians that they are required to be circumcised. The result is division within their church (5:15). Paul gives numerous reasons why they should return to the simple truth of the gospel.

Key Themes

1. In his sin-bearing death, Christ is a substitute for all Christians. He brings them into a new realm of freedom and life (1:4; 2:20; 3:13).
2. The gospel of Christ comes from God alone—not from any human source. Paul himself is a living example of this. His conversion to Christ and his apostleship were not through human means. They came through direct revelation from Christ (1:1, 11–12, 15–20).
3. Salvation comes not by works of law but by faith, which leads to justification (2:16).

Galatians 3:26-29

²⁶ for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. ²⁷ For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. ²⁸ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ²⁹ And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

4. To require circumcision and other Mosaic laws as a supplement to faith is to fall back from the realm of grace and freedom and to come under the whole law and its curse, since perfect observance of the law is impossible (2:12–14, 16; 3:10; 4:10; 5:3). **In Galatians 2:11-14, Paul rebuked Peter for refusing to eat with Gentiles.**
5. Old Testament Scripture itself testifies to the truth of justification by faith (Gen. 15:6; Hab. 2:4).
6. Believers have died with Christ to sin and therefore have renounced the flesh (Gal. 5:24; 6:14).
7. The Spirit is the source of power and guidance in the Christian life. He produces love and faith in the believer (5:6, 16, 18, 25).

Galatians 5:16,22-23

¹⁶ But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. . . .

²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Galatians 6:7-10

⁷ Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. ⁸ For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. ⁹ And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. ¹⁰ So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.

8. The Christian life is one of pleasing Christ. This requires willingness to suffer persecution for the sake of his cross (1:10; 6:12, 14).

Outline

1. Opening (1:1–9)
2. Indirect Appeal: Paul's Ministry and the Gospel (1:10–2:21)
3. Direct Appeals to the Galatians (3:1–5:12)
4. Life in the Spirit and Love (5:13–6:10)
5. Final Warning (6:11–18)

Galatians 4:6-7

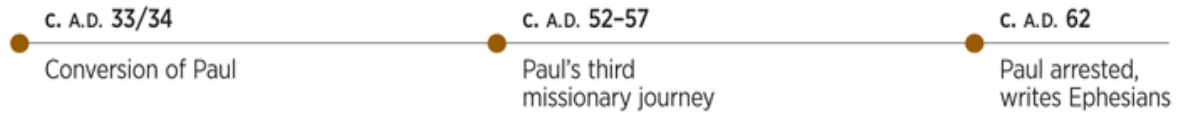
⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" ⁷ So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

Galatians 5:13-14

¹³ For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴ For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

E. Ephesians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the churches in Ephesus and the surrounding region c. A.D. 62 while imprisoned in Rome (Acts 28). During this time he also wrote Colossians and Philemon. All three letters were sent with Tychicus and Onesimus.

Theme

There are three main themes of Ephesians: (1) Christ has reconciled all creation to himself and to God; (2) Christ has united people from all nations to himself and to one another in his church; and (3) Christians must live as new people.

Purpose

Ephesians offers general instruction in the truths of God's redemptive work in Christ; the unity of the church among diverse peoples; and proper conduct in the church, the home, and the world.

Key Themes

1. God predestined his people to redemption and holiness in Christ (1:3–14; 2:4, 8–9).

All three members of the Trinity are involved in our salvation: The Father chooses (ELECTION). The Son redeems. The Holy Spirit guarantees.

Ephesians 1:3-14

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴ even as **he chose us in him before the foundation of the world**, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love ⁵ he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. ⁷ **In him we have redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, ⁸ which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight ⁹ making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ ¹⁰ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.

¹¹ In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, ¹² so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. ¹³ In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised **Holy Spirit**, ¹⁴ **who is the guarantee of our inheritance** until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

2. All people are by nature spiritually dead. They disobey God's law and are ruled by Satan (1:7; 2:1–3, 5, 11–12).

Ephesians 2:1 ¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins.

3. God's rich mercy in Christ has saved sinners. This free gift is by grace through faith alone (1:7–8; 2:4–14).

Ephesians 2:4-10

⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

4. Jesus' saving work was part of redeeming a fallen creation for God. For this he deserves glory, honor, and authority in this age and the next (1:15–23; 3:1–13).
5. Jesus unites Jews and Gentiles into his one body, the church, as a new creation (1:23; 2:10–22; 3:1–21; 4:1–6).
6. Christ's people are saved to new lives of holiness in thought, word, and deed. They must reject their old, sinful lifestyles (4:1–3, 17–32; 5:1–20).

Ephesians 4:25-32

²⁵ Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. ²⁶ Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷ and give no opportunity to the devil. ²⁸ Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. ³⁰ And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. ³¹ Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. ³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

7. Holiness in life includes **submission to proper authorities**, in home and family life, and **those in authority must care** for those in submission to them (5:21–6:9).

Ephesians 5:15-6:4

¹⁵ Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶ making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷ Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸ And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, ¹⁹ addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, ²⁰ giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. ²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, ²⁶ that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷ so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.^[a] ²⁸ In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, ³⁰ because we are members of his body. ³¹ "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." ³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the

church. ³³ However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

^{6:1} Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), ³ “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” ⁴ Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

8. Jesus has given powerful gifts to his church. These bring unity, maturity, and defense against the devil and his allies (4:7–16; 6:10–19).

Ephesians 6:10-20

¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ **Put on the whole armor of God**, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Outline

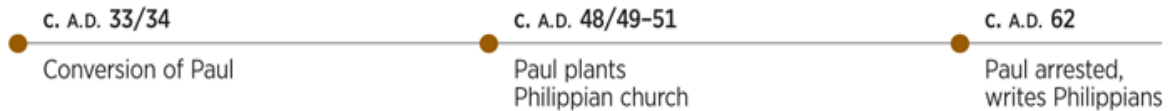
1. Introduction (1:1–14)
2. Paul’s Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:15–23)
3. Salvation by Grace through Faith (2:1–10)
4. Unity and the Peace of Christ (2:11–22)
5. Revelation of the Gospel Mystery (3:1–13)
6. Paul’s Prayer for Strength and Insight (3:14–21)
7. Unity of the Body of Christ (4:1–16)
8. Paul’s Testimony (4:17–24)
9. Encouragement for a Holy Lifestyle (4:25–32)
10. New Life in Love (5:1–20)
11. Submission to One Another (5:21–6:9)
12. The Whole Armor of God (6:10–20)
13. Conclusion (6:21–24)

Ephesians 3:20-21

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, ²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

F. Philippians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Philippi, probably from Rome while he was imprisoned c. A.D. 62.

Theme

Paul encourages the Philippians to live as citizens of a heavenly city, growing in their commitment to serve God and one another. Jesus is the supreme example of this way of life. Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus try to be good examples as well.

Purpose

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison. He had several purposes in mind: (1) to tell them that Epaphroditus had recovered from a serious illness; (2) to encourage them in their faith; (3) to assure them that he was still in good spirits; and (4) to thank them for their continued support.

Key Themes

1. Christians need to keep making spiritual progress (1:12, 25; 3:12–16).
2. Such progress requires a proper spiritual outlook (1:5–11; 2:1–11; 3:7, 15; 4:7–9).
3. Christ is the supreme example for the Christian. Mature Christians can also serve as role models (1:12–26; 2:5–11, 19–30; 3:3–17; 4:9).
4. Suffering will come, but Christians can still be joyful (1:12–26; 2:14–15; 4:4, 11–13, 19).

Philippians 1:21-24

²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. **My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.** ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

Philippians 4:19-20

¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

5. Prayer is crucial for maintaining a **joyful Christian life** (1:3–11; 4:5–7).

Philippians 1:3-6

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

6. Perseverance/Preservation of the Saints (**ETERNAL SECURITY**)

Philippians 1:6

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

7. Christians can enjoy rich relationships with one another; they can be united in service to promote the gospel (1:4, 7, 24–27; 2:1–4, 19–30; 4:2–4, 14).
8. Keeping the law cannot provide a right standing with God; believers are saved only through their faith in Jesus Christ (3:2–10).
9. Jesus is fully God and fully man. Because of his suffering on the cross, he is now glorified as Lord and Christ (2:5–11).

Philippians 2:1-11

¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Outline

1. Greeting and Prayer (1:1–11)
2. Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment (1:12–30)
3. Encouragement to Humble Service (2:1–30)
4. Opponents of the Gospel: Where Does Righteousness Come From? (3:1–21)
5. Concluding Encouragement and Thanksgiving (4:1–23)

Philippians 4:8-9

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹ What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

G. Colossians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to Christians living in the small city of Colossae. It was probably written c. A.D. 62, while Paul was in prison in Rome (Acts 27–28). This was about the same time he wrote Ephesians and Philemon. All three letters were sent with Tychicus and Onesimus.

Theme

Christ is Lord over all of creation, including the invisible realm. He has redeemed his people, enabling them to participate in his death, resurrection, and fullness.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

A dangerous teaching was threatening the church at Colossae, one that lessened Christ's role and undermined the new identity of believers "in Christ" (1:2, 28). This "Colossian heresy" mixed elements of Jewish legalism, Greek philosophy, and mystical asceticism. Paul wrote to warn against this false teaching and to encourage the believers in their growth toward Christian maturity. He emphasizes Christ's authority over all evil powers. Christians are united with the risen Christ, and therefore they share in his power and authority. Paul also encourages these believers to fight against sin, pursue holiness, and live as distinctively Christian households.

Key Themes

1. Jesus Christ is preeminent over all creation, Lord over all human rulers and cosmic powers (1:15–20; 2:9–10; 3:1).

Colossians 1:15-20

¹⁵ He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸ And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. ¹⁹ For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰ and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Colossians 2:6-10

⁶ Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, ¹⁰ and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.

2. God has acted through Christ to secure redemption and reconciliation for all who put their faith in him (1:13–14, 20–22).
3. Believers are in Christ, and so they share in Christ's death, resurrection, new life, and his fullness (2:9–14; 3:1–4).
4. Christ has defeated the powers of darkness on the cross. Christians share in his power and authority over that realm (2:10, 15; see also 2:8, 20).
5. Jesus is the fulfillment of Jewish expectation. Christians share in the heritage of the old covenant people of God through their union with him (1:12, 21–22, 27).
6. Believers are called to grow in spiritual maturity by getting rid of sinful practices and developing Christian virtues (1:10–12, 28; 3:1–4:6).

Colossians 3:12–17, 23

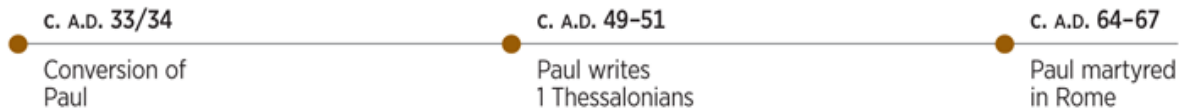
¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. ¹⁴ And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. ¹⁵ And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. ¹⁶ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. ¹⁷ And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. . . .
²³ Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men,

Outline

1. Greeting (1:1–2)
2. Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
3. Prayer (1:9–14)
4. Praise to Christ (1:15–20)
5. Reconciliation to God (1:21–23)
6. Paul's Labor for the Gospel (1:24–2:3)
7. The Dangerous Teaching at Colossae (2:4–23)
8. The Proper Focus: Christ and the Life Above (3:1–4)
9. Instructions on Living the Christian Life (3:5–4:6)
10. Personal Greetings and Instructions (4:7–17)
11. Closing (4:18)

H. 1 Thessalonians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

Paul wrote this letter to the church in Thessalonica. He probably wrote in A.D. 49–51 from Corinth during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–18).

Theme

The main theme is Jesus' second coming. When he returns, the dead who have believed in Christ will rise and will join the living to meet the Lord in the air (4:15–17). Unbelievers will experience God's wrath, while believers will inherit salvation (1:10; 5:2–4, 9–10). In preparation for that great day, Christians are called to be holy and blameless (3:11–4:8; 5:23). God, who is faithful, will produce in them the holiness he requires (5:24).

Purpose

Paul has received a report from Timothy about the Thessalonian church. Paul writes to them to restore their hope, which has been tested by unexpected deaths in the church. He reassures them that both the dead and the living believers will be safe at the second coming (4:13–5:11). In addition, Paul wants (1) to stress the authenticity of himself, Silas, and Timothy as preachers of the gospel (1:5; 2:1–12; 2:17–3:10); (2) to teach them that persecution is normal for Christians (3:3–4); and (3) to challenge them to take responsibility for earning their own living (4:9–12).

Key Themes

1. God's wrath comes on those who reject the gospel (2:16; 5:3).
2. Jesus' death and resurrection are the basis for the Christian's hope (4:14; 5:10).
3. Christians are destined not for wrath but for salvation when Christ returns (1:10; 5:4, 9).
4. Christians who die will participate fully in the second coming (4:14–17; 5:10).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

¹³ But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. ¹⁴ For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁵ For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. ¹⁶ For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

5. Those who respond to the gospel have been elected and called by God. They continue to be called by God throughout their lives (1:4; 2:12; 4:7; 5:9, 24).

1 Thessalonians 1:2-5

² We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, ³ remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴ For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, ⁵ because our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

6. Christians should live lives of complete holiness (3:13; 4:3–8; 5:23).
7. Christians must never ignore their responsibility to work (4:9–12; 5:14).
8. The truth of the gospel is confirmed by the integrity of its preachers (1:5; 2:1–12).
9. Joy, especially in suffering, is a mark of the Christian (1:6; 5:16).
10. Christians experience the realities of the new covenant (4:8–9).
11. Faith, hope, and love are essential traits of the Christian (1:2–3; 5:8).

Outline

1. Opening (1:1)
2. Thanksgiving and Encouragement (1:2–3:13)
3. Instruction and Exhortation (4:1–5:28)

The Setting of 1 Thessalonians

c. A.D. 49–51

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth near the end of his second missionary journey. Paul and his companions had established the church in Thessalonica but were forced to leave by opponents of the gospel. Later, Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica to check on the church there, and Timothy's report led Paul to write this letter. Thessalonica enjoyed privileged status as the capital of Macedonia and was located on a natural harbor along the busy east-west Egnatian Way.

I. 2 Thessalonians

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

Shortly after writing 1 Thessalonians, the apostle Paul received a report (2 Thess. 3:11) that the Thessalonian church had accepted the strange claim that “the day of the Lord has come” (2:1–2). Paul sent them a second letter in A.D. 49–51. He was probably in Corinth at the time.

Theme

The Thessalonians were concerned that Christ’s return has already taken place. The letter’s main theme is Jesus’ second coming. Jesus’ return will be preceded by an “apostasy” (or rebellion) and by the appearance of the “man of lawlessness,” the Antichrist (2:3). When Jesus comes, he will defeat this rebellious world ruler (2:8). He will bring justice to oppressed Christians and wrath to unbelievers (1:5–10; 2:9–15).

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians (1) to reassure those terrified that the day of the Lord had already come (2:1–3:5); (2) to strengthen the Thessalonians in the face of continuing persecution (1:3–12); and (3) to deal with the problem of some of the church members refusing to earn their own living (3:6–15).

Paul assumes that the Thessalonian church knew that the second coming of Jesus Christ would occur at the same time as the coming of the “day of the Lord.” Yet the Thessalonians may simply have fallen victim to a belief that the day of the Lord had already come. The persecution they were undergoing may have fueled their confusion about the end times.

Some of the Thessalonians may have stopped working to await and proclaim the second coming. More likely, lazy Christians may have been exploiting the generosity of wealthier Christians in order to avoid work.

In contrast to the warm emotional tone of 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians includes some blunt commands as Paul addresses bad behavior and bad thinking. Further, this letter is noteworthy for Paul’s tough-mindedness in predicting judgment on the ungodly and in rebuking church members who behave and think incorrectly. Still, there is a regular swing back and forth between reproof and warm encouragement.

Key Themes

1. God’s righteous judgment will be completed when Jesus returns. Unbelievers will be condemned and believers will be saved (1:5–10; 2:9–14).
2. Christians will share Christ’s glory (1:10, 12; 2:14).

3. Jesus will return after the “man of lawlessness” appears and humanity rebels for a final time (2:3–4, 9–12).
4. The man of lawlessness will deceive all those who have rejected the gospel. Jesus will judge them when he returns (2:3, 6–12).
5. Christians must not take advantage of the charity of fellow Christians (3:6–15).

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

¹⁰ For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: **If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.** ¹¹ For we hear that some among you walk in idleness, not busy at work, but busybodies. ¹² Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.

Outline

1. Opening (1:1–2)
2. Thanksgiving and Comfort for the Persecuted Thessalonians (1:3–12)
3. Disproving the False Claim about the Day of the Lord (2:1–17)
4. Transition (3:1–5)
5. The Problem of Lazy Christians (3:6–15)
6. Conclusion (3:16–18)

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are known as the Pastoral Epistles because Paul wrote them to individual pastors rather than to entire churches. These letters focus on the organization, leadership, doctrine, and moral conduct of the church.

J. 1 Timothy

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipient

The apostle Paul probably wrote this letter to Timothy in the mid-60s A.D., during a mission trip not recorded in Scripture. This trip took place after the events described in Acts, between Paul's first and final Roman imprisonments.

Theme

The letter's theme is that the gospel leads to practical, visible change in believers' lives. The true gospel, in contrast to false teaching, must and will always lead to godliness.

Purpose

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to advise his coworker Timothy about issues in the church in Ephesus. False teachers are the main cause for the letter. Their teaching apparently involved incorrect assumptions about the law (1:7–11) and not allowing marriage and certain foods (4:1–5). Paul's real concern is with the results of the false teaching. For example, it promotes mere theories over solid truth (1:4; 6:4). It also leads to arrogance (6:4) and greed (6:5–10). Paul focuses on the fact that true Christianity is shown in lifestyles shaped by the gospel. Those whose lives are not shaped by the gospel have turned away from the faith (1:6, 19–20; 4:1; 5:6, 8, 11–12, 15; 6:9–10).

Key Themes

1. The gospel produces holiness in the lives of believers. There is no legitimate separation between belief and behavior. Thus, those who profess faith but show no progress in godliness should question their spiritual health (1:5; 2:8–15; 3:1–16; 4:6–16; 5:4–6, 8; 6:3–5, 11–14, 18–19).
1 Timothy 4:12
¹² Let no one despise you for your youth, but set the believers an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.
2. Worldwide evangelism is essential. It is rooted in God's own evangelistic desire (1:15; 2:1–7; 3:16; 4:10).
3. One key evidence of receiving the gospel is proper behavior in corporate worship, in matters like evangelistic prayer, unity, modesty, and submission (2:1–15).
4. Appropriate honor is a key element in how Christians should relate to one another in the church (5:1–6:2).

5. Everything God created is good. It is to be appreciated, but not worshiped (4:4–5; 6:17–19).
6. It is important to protect the purity of the gospel (1:3–7, 18–20; 4:6–16; 6:2b–3, 12, 20–21).
7. Church leaders (overseers/elders, deacons) should be people whose lives are shaped by the gospel (3:1–13; 4:6–16).

1 Timothy 3:1-13

¹ The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of **overseer**, he desires a noble task. ² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, ³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. ⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, ⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? ⁶ He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.

⁸ **Deacons** likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. ⁹ They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. ¹¹ Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. ¹³ For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

Outline

1. Greeting (1:1–2)
2. Confronting the False Teaching (1:3–20)
3. Descriptions of Gospel-shaped Living (2:1–3:13)
4. Purpose of Writing: Behavior in the Church (3:14–16)
5. Identifying the False Teaching (4:1–5)
6. How Timothy Should Be Shaped by the Gospel (4:6–16)
7. How Specific Groups in the Church Should Be Shaped by the Gospel (5:1–6:2a)
8. Confronting the False Teaching Again (6:2b–21)

The Setting of 1 Timothy

c. A.D. 62–64

Paul likely wrote 1 Timothy during a fourth missionary journey not recorded in the book of Acts. Writing from an unknown location, Paul wrote to Timothy at Ephesus to instruct him on how to lead the church there. Ephesus was a wealthy and highly influential port city in the Roman province of Asia, renowned for its temple of Artemis (Diana).

K. 2 Timothy

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipient

Paul wrote this second letter to Timothy during his second imprisonment in Rome, shortly before his death. This imprisonment was after the one recorded in Acts 28. He probably wrote it in A.D. 64–65, though some would place it as late as 67.

Timothy's mother was Eunice and his grandmother was Lois, both Jewish believers known for their sincere faith (1:5). His father was a Greek (Gentile), and likely unbelieving, since he is mentioned only briefly and Timothy had not been circumcised (Acts 16:1–3). Thus, Timothy was of mixed heritage—a Jewish mother and a Greek father—and was raised in the Jewish Scriptures that later led him to faith in Christ (3:14–15).

Theme

Paul gives Timothy a bold, clear call to continue in the gospel despite suffering.

Purpose

Several people have abandoned Paul while he has been in prison, and several others are away on assignments (1:15; 4:9–12). In such a time, Paul's memories of Timothy's sincerity and devotion are especially touching (1:3–5). Paul thinks he will die soon (4:6–8), so he writes this final message to Timothy. Paul urges Timothy to stand firm and asks him to come for one final visit before Paul is executed. Though Paul's death is near, he does not know just when it will come. Paul also asks Timothy to bring his books and parchments, so that he can keep studying and writing until the end.

Second Timothy is very personal. It is a final letter to a close friend and coworker. Paul encourages Timothy to continue in faithfulness and offers his own life as an example for Timothy to follow. What he calls on Timothy to do, he himself has done already.

Key Themes

1. Suffering is part of the Christian experience (1:8, 12; 2:3, 9; 3:11–12; 4:5, 14–18).
2. The Christian response to suffering is steady faith by God's power (1:8; 2:1, 11–13; 4:1–8).
3. The gospel is the basis for the Christian's endurance (1:9–11; 2:8–10).

4. The Scriptures have power to save and to preserve (2:15; 3:15–17; 4:1–2).

INSPIRATION: Scripture is “God-breathed.”

2 Timothy 3:14-17

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

5. True believers will continue in the faith. Failure to do so proves one is not truly converted (2:11–13, 19; 3:14; 4:7, 10).

2 Timothy 4:7

⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

6. False teaching is deadly and must be dealt with firmly (2:16–18, 23–26; 3:1–9; 4:3–5).

Outline

1. Opening (1:1–2)
2. Enduring for the Gospel (1:3–2:13)
3. Dealing with False Teachers (2:14–3:9)
4. Contrasting Timothy with False Teachers (3:10–4:8)
5. Conclusion (4:9–22)

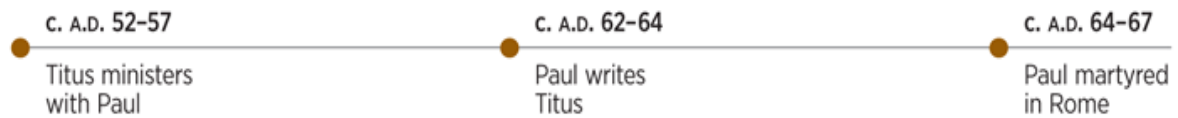
The Setting of 2 Timothy

c. A.D. 64–67

Paul probably wrote 2 Timothy during a second imprisonment in Rome following a fourth missionary journey that is not recorded in the book of Acts. Expecting that death would come soon, Paul wrote this “farewell” letter to Timothy, who was at Ephesus, urging him to stand firm and asking him to come for one final visit.

L. Titus

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipient

The apostle Paul wrote this letter to his coworker Titus. The letter was probably written in the mid-60s A.D. between Paul's first imprisonment (Acts 28) and his second imprisonment, which is not mentioned in Acts.

Theme

The letter's theme is the unbreakable link between faith and practice, belief and behavior. This truth is the basis for Paul's criticism of false teaching, his instruction in Christian living, and standards he sets for church leaders.

Purpose

Paul had recently completed a journey to Crete. He had left Titus there to teach the new church (see Acts 14:21-23).

False teachers were already a problem in the church (Titus 1:10-16), and the letter focuses primarily on that issue. The description of elders (1:5-9) and of proper Christian living (2:1-10; 3:1-3) appear to be worded for intentional contrast with these false teachers. The content of the false teaching is not fully explained (as in 1 Timothy). There appears to be a significant Jewish element to the teaching. The opponents come from "the circumcision party" (Titus 1:10). They are interested in "Jewish myths" (1:14) and perhaps ritual purity (1:15). Paul's primary concern, however, is with the practical effect of the false teaching. They taught ritual purity, but they lived in a way that proved they did not know God (1:16). This false teaching would have been welcome in Crete, which was known in the ancient world for immorality. But Paul expected the gospel to produce real godliness in everyday life, even in Crete.

In dealing with the false teaching, Paul also provides Titus with a portrait of a healthy church. He describes proper leadership (1:5-9; a summary of elder/overseer qualifications), proper handling of error (1:10-16; 3:9-11), proper Christian living (especially important for new believers in an immoral setting; 2:1-10; 3:1-2), and the gospel as the source of godliness (2:11-14; 3:3-7).

Key Themes

1. The gospel produces godliness in the lives of believers. There is no legitimate separation between belief and behavior (1:1; 2:1, 11-14; 3:4-7).
2. One's deeds will either prove or disprove one's claim to know God (1:16).
3. It is vitally important to have godly men serving as elders/pastors (1:5-9).

4. True Christian living will draw others to the gospel (2:5, 8, 10).
5. Good works have an important place in the lives of believers (2:1–10, 14; 3:1–2, 8, 14).
6. It is important to deal clearly and firmly with doctrinal and moral error in the church (1:10–16; 3:9–11).
7. The gospel is the basis for Christian ethics (2:11–14; 3:3–7).

Titus 3:3-7

³ For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. ⁴ But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Outline

1. Opening (1:1–4)
2. The Occasion: The Need for Proper Leadership (1:5–9)
3. The Problem: False Teachers (1:10–16)
4. Christian Living in Contrast to the False Teachers (2:1–3:8)
5. The Problem Restated: False Teachers (3:9–11)
6. Closing Encouragement (3:12–15)

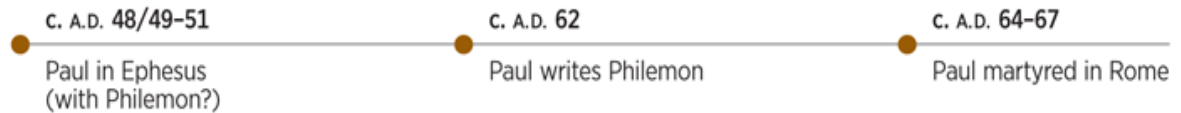
The Setting of Titus

c. A.D. 62–64

Paul likely wrote Titus during a fourth missionary journey not recorded in the book of Acts. Writing from an unknown location, he instructed Titus in how to lead the churches on the island of Crete. The churches there had apparently been founded by Paul.

M. Philemon

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

This is a personal letter from the apostle Paul to Philemon, a wealthy Christian from Colossae. It was also intended for reading to the entire church that met in Philemon's home. It was probably written c. A.D. 62, while Paul was in prison following his voyage to Rome (Acts 27–28).

Theme

The theme of Paul's letter is the power of the gospel to transform individual lives (v. 11) and human relationships (v. 16). Onesimus had experienced that transforming power in his life ("formerly he was useless" but "now he is indeed useful"; v. 11). **Paul therefore urged his friend Philemon to form a new relationship with Onesimus, his runaway slave.**

Purpose

Apparently, during Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus (A.D. 52–55), Philemon heard the gospel and was saved. He began serving Christ in the Colossian community. He opened his home for a group of Christians to meet there regularly.

At some point, Onesimus, one of Philemon's bondservants, fled to Rome. Before he left, he possibly had stolen money or property from Philemon. While in Rome, Onesimus came into contact with Paul and became a Christian. As he grew in Christ, he was a great help to Paul during Paul's imprisonment.

As much as Paul would like to have retained the services of Onesimus, Paul knew that Onesimus's wrongdoing against his master Philemon needed to be addressed. He wrote this letter urging Philemon to appreciate the transformation that had occurred in Onesimus. Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus back not merely as a bondservant but as a "beloved brother" (v. 16).

It is difficult to know if Paul sought Onesimus's full freedom. It is clear, however, that he was seeking a transformed relationship between bondservant and master. This new relationship would defy all of the ingrained status distinctions of the surrounding Greek and Roman culture. It would have been difficult for the kind of servitude practiced by Rome to survive in the atmosphere of Christian love exemplified by the letter.

This simplified letter is in the form of letters that people ordinarily write, in contrast to the more stylized and literary five-part format of most NT epistles. The letter is a masterpiece of persuasion as Paul seeks a favorable reception for the returning bondservant, where normally one might expect the master to be vindictive.

Paul's strategy follows that prescribed by Greek and Roman rhetoricians of the day: begin by building rapport and goodwill with an audience (vv. 4–10), then lay out the facts in a way that will convince the mind or intellect (vv. 11–19), and finally appeal to the emotions of the audience (vv. 20–21).

Key Themes

1. Reconciliation is the theme of this letter. Onesimus is reconciled to God. He is in the process of being reconciled to a fellow believer.
2. The basis for Paul's appeal to Philemon is the supreme Christian virtue of love. Paul praises Philemon for the love he has shown not just to him but to all the believers in that area.

Outline

1. Greetings (vv. 1–3)
2. Thanksgiving and Prayer (vv. 4–7)
3. Paul's Appeal to Philemon for Onesimus (vv. 8–20)
4. Personal Remarks and Greetings (vv. 21–25)

Philemon 4-7

⁴ I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, ⁵ because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, ⁶ and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ. ⁷ For I have derived much joy and comfort from your love, my brother, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you.

III. General Epistles¹⁸¹

A. Hebrews

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The author of Hebrews is unknown. He knew Timothy (13:23). He was not an eyewitness of Jesus (see 2:1, 3). The letter was probably written before A.D. 70. Early manuscripts bear the title “To the Hebrews,” which reflects the ancient assumption that it was written to Jewish Christians as well as Gentile Christians who previously had been drawn to the Jewish religion. The author knew his readers and wanted to see them again (13:19).

Theme

Jesus Christ is greater than any angel, priest, or old covenant practice. Christians must not forsake the great salvation that Jesus has brought about. They must hold on by faith to the true rest found in Christ, and they must encourage others in the church to do the same.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Hebrews has two primary purposes: to encourage Christians to endure, and to warn them not to abandon their faith in Christ. These warning passages appear throughout the book (2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 5:11–6:12; 10:19–39; 12:1–29). The author encourages faithfulness, love, and sound doctrine. **He does so by carefully teaching the OT in light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. God's OT Word is relevant to God's NT people.**

The author shows the superiority of Christ and his new covenant over angels, Moses, the OT priesthood, and the OT sacrificial system. These are so inferior to Christ that it is futile to return to them—or to go anywhere else. Rather, believers should hold fast to their faith, because that faith is grounded in the most superior revelation.

The background of such exhortations must have been the readers' need to continue enduring amid persecution and the trials of life (e.g., ch. 12). They appear to have grown less attentive to Christian instruction (5:11–14), and some apparently have ceased regular attendance at their meetings (10:25). The author reminds them of their past faithfulness and love despite persecution (10:32–34).

Ultimately, the author's words of encouragement and exhortation are rooted in his teaching about Jesus Christ. The Son of God became the heavenly high priest, who offered himself as a sacrifice once for all. Christ obtained salvation for all who approach him in faith (6:1; 11:6; compare 4:2), and such faith perseveres until it receives the promised eternal reward (6:12; 10:22, 38–39).

¹⁸¹ *The Student Study Bible.* **The General Epistles were written by people other than Paul.**

Key Themes

1. Jesus is fully God and fully man (1:1–14; 2:5–18).
2. Jesus, the Son of God, reveals God the Father. He is the creator and he sustains all creation (1:1–14).
3. Jesus is the eternal high priest. As a man, he sympathizes with human weaknesses, and he offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin (1:3; 2:10–18; 4:15–16; 9:11–10:19).

Hebrews 4:14-16

¹⁴ Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶ Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

4. Jesus is superior to angels, to Moses, to the Mosaic covenant, to the earthly tabernacle, and to the priesthood (1:4–2:18; 3:1–6; 5:1–10; 7:1–10:18).
5. All humanity faces eternal judgment for sin (4:12–13; 9:27–28; 10:26–31).
6. Faith is necessary to please God and to participate in his eternal salvation. Faith requires confidence about the unseen realities of God and his promises. Such faith produces perseverance (6:1; 10:22, 38–39; 11:1–40).

Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

7. Perseverance is necessary in the Christian life; believers are warned against a lack of endurance (2:1–4; 3:7–4:13; 10:19–39; 12:1–29).
8. God's promises are trustworthy, including his promise of eternal salvation (6:13–20).
9. With the coming of Jesus Christ, the last days have begun. They will be completed when he returns (1:2; 9:9–28; 12:22–29).

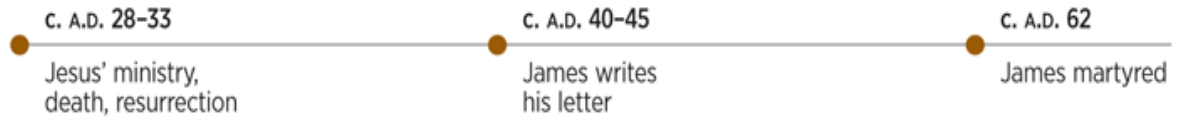
Outline

1. Jesus Is Superior to Angelic Beings (1:1–2:18)
2. Jesus Is Superior to the Mosaic Law (3:1–10:18)
3. Call to Faith and Endurance (10:19–12:29) **Hebrews 11: "HALL OF FAITH"**
4. Concluding Encouragements and Remarks (13:1–25)

"Hall of Faith": Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses' parents, Moses, Israelites, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, prophets, plus other unnamed believers who demonstrated faith in God's promises. **Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.**

B. James

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

This letter was written by James, the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55) and leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15). It was probably written about A.D. 40–45 to Jewish Christians living outside Palestine.

Theme

Christians must live out their faith. **They should be doers, not just hearers, of God's Word.**

Purpose

James's readers were suffering persecution and living in poverty. They were in social and spiritual conflict. Many believers were living in a worldly manner. James corrects them and challenges them to seek God's wisdom to work out these problems.

Key Themes

1. Rather than merely hearing God's word, believers must obey it in their daily actions (1:19–27; 2:14–26).

James 1:19-25

*¹⁹ Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰ for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. ²¹ Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. ²² **But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.** ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. ²⁴ For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. ²⁵ But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.*

2. God is a gracious giver, the **unchanging Creator**, and merciful and compassionate. He is also a Judge, the one and only God, a jealous God, a gracious God, and a healing God (1:5, 17–18; 2:5, 13, 19; 4:5–6; 5:1–3, 9, 15).

God is IMMUTABLE. He doesn't change.

James 1:17

¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

3. Wisdom comes “from above.” It enables believers to withstand trials and to have peace rather than divisions among themselves (1:5; 3:13, 17).

James 1:5

⁵ If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.

4. God allows tests and trials (1:2–4), but temptation comes from self and Satan. The required response is patient endurance (1:3, 13–14; 4:7; 5:7–8).
5. These trials include poverty and mistreatment by the rich. The poor are the special focus of God’s care. They must be cared for by his people. They must not be taken advantage of or ignored. The wealthy are condemned for pride and for stealing from the poor (1:9, 27; 2:1–5, 15–16; 4:13–17; 5:1–6).

James 1:27

²⁷ Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

6. There is both future judgment and future reward (1:12; 2:5, 12–13; 3:1; 4:12; 5:1–7, 9, 20).

7. **TAMING THE TONGUE:** What a person says has power both to destroy and to bring peace (3:1–4:12).

James 3:5–10

⁵ So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶ And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷ For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸ but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹ With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰ From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

8. Prayer is the proper response to trials, but it must not be self-seeking. It is to be central in all of life’s circumstances, good or bad. God has great power to heal physical and spiritual problems (1:5–7; 4:2–3; 5:13–18).
9. James and Paul agree that justification comes only by God’s grace through faith, and that true faith always results in good works. If no works result, there was no justification in the first place (2:14–26).

Outline

1. Greeting (1:1)
2. The Testing of Faith (1:2–18)
3. Hearing and Doing the Word (1:19–27)
4. The Sin of Favoritism (2:1–13)
5. Faith without Works Is Dead (2:14–26)
6. The Sin of Dissension in the Community (3:1–4:12)
7. The Sins of the Wealthy (4:13–5:12)
8. The Prayer of Faith (5:13–18)
9. Concluding Admonition (5:19–20)

C. 1 Peter

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The apostle Peter wrote this letter (1:1). He was once a fisherman but now was a disciple, a “witness of the sufferings of Christ” (5:1). He probably wrote the letter from Rome (see 5:13; “Babylon” almost certainly refers to Rome) around A.D. 62–63 during Nero’s reign. The letter is addressed to Christians scattered in “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1). This is an area north of the Taurus Mountains in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey). These territories had been impacted by Greco-Roman culture and had been under Roman control from the mid-first century B.C.

Theme

Those who persevere in faith while suffering persecution should be full of hope. They will certainly enjoy end-time salvation, since they already enjoy God’s saving promises through Christ’s death and resurrection.

Purpose

Peter is writing to encourage his readers to endure suffering and persecution (1:6–7; 2:18–20; 3:9, 13–17; 4:1–4, 12–19; 5:9) by giving themselves entirely to God (4:19). They are to remain faithful in times of distress, knowing that God will vindicate them and that they will certainly enjoy the salvation that the Lord has promised. Christ’s death and resurrection are the model for believers. Just as Christ suffered and then entered into glory, so too his followers will suffer before being exalted.

Key Themes

- Those who suffer as Christians will be proven faithful when Christ returns (1:6–9; 2:18–25; 3:13–22; 4:12–19).
1 Peter 3:15-16
¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.
- The church is the new Israel, the new people of God (1:1–2; 2:4–10).
1 Peter 2:9-10
⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.
- Believers should set their hope on their end-time inheritance (1:3–9, 13–16).

4. Christ died as a substitute for sinners. His death is the basis for their new life (1:17–21; 2:24; 3:13–22).

1 Peter 3:18

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit.

5. Christ's suffering is an example to his disciples (2:21–24).

1 Peter 2:21–24

²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

6. At his resurrection, Christ triumphed over his enemies (3:18–22).

7. Christians should live righteously in their homes and in society (2:11–3:7).

8. New life in Christ is the basis for a life of love and holiness (1:3; 1:13–2:3).

PROGRESSIVE SANCTIFICATION: Becoming progressively holy and like Jesus in conduct.

***1 Peter 1:15–16:** ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

INITIAL SANCTIFICATION: The act by which God sets a believer apart as holy at the moment of conversion, in contrast to progressive sanctification, which is the lifelong process of growing in holiness and Christlikeness.

***1 Corinthians 6:11:** ¹¹ But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.*

9. Christians should use their God-given gifts for God's glory.

1 Peter 4:10–11

¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

10. Elders should shepherd God's flock.

1 Peter 5:1–5

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: ² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; ³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴ And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. ⁵ Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

Outline

1. Opening (1:1–2)
2. Called to Salvation as Exiles (1:3–2:10)
3. Living as Strangers to Bring Glory to God in a Hostile World (2:11–4:11)
4. Enduring Suffering (4:12–5:11)
5. Concluding Words (5:12–14)

1 Peter 1:24–25

²⁴ "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord remains forever." [quoted from Isaiah 40:6–8]

D. 2 Peter

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

Peter identifies himself as an “apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). He specifically mentions that he was an eyewitness of the transfiguration (1:16–18; see Matt. 17:1–8). Peter probably wrote this letter from prison in Rome (see 2 Pet. 1:12–15) not too long before his death by execution, sometime during A.D. 64–67. It is impossible to identify with certainty the churches Peter addresses. He may have been writing to the churches of Asia Minor, because Peter mentions that this is his second letter to these same people (3:1; see 1 Pet. 1:1–2). (On the similarities between 2 Peter 2 and Jude, see Introduction to Jude.)

Theme

God's grace in Christ truly transforms and empowers Christians to live righteously, despite opposition. This grace, introduced in 1:2–4, serves as the foundation for the whole book. The indwelling Holy Spirit produces virtuous qualities in followers of Christ (1:8–12). This results in fruitful lives.

Purpose and Occasion

Peter writes his brief, final reminder to the churches so that his readers will, by God's grace, live in a way that is pleasing to God. In doing so, Peter must also combat the false teachers who were apparently exerting pressure on the churches to depart from the true knowledge of Christ (see esp. ch. 2). The false teaching is not only a theological challenge but also a moral one, promoting some form of sexual permissiveness as a legitimate Christian lifestyle.

While the false teaching can be described based on what Peter writes, it is historically impossible to identify who the false teachers were. For example, there is no clear historical evidence that these teachers were Gnostics.

Second Peter deals with serious issues, but it is also filled with famous proverbs and wise sayings, as well as vivid poetry and imagery.

Key Themes

1. God, through his grace in Jesus Christ, has enabled Christians to partake of the divine nature (1:2–4).

2 Peter 1:3-4

³His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, ⁴by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may

become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

2. God's grace results in godliness (1:5–15).
3. The revelation of truth in Christ and in Scripture is sure because it is from God and not from man (1:16–21).

INSPIRATION (Scripture is "God-breathed")

2 Peter 1:21

²¹ For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

4. False teachers are handed over for destruction at the hand of God (2:1–10).
5. False teachers are ethically bankrupt (2:11–22).
6. Believers must endure in the face of opposition, knowing that they are living in the last days (3:1–13).
7. The Lord is patient with his creation, but someday he will suddenly return to judge it (3:8–10).

2 Peter 3:8-10

⁸ But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

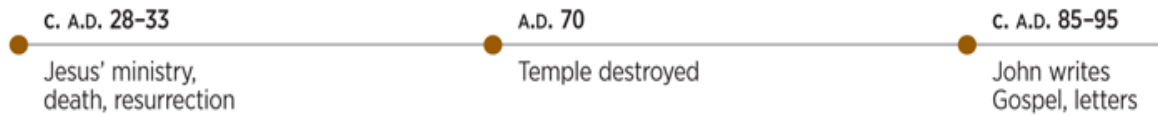
8. God rescues the righteous (2:7–9; 3:13–18).

Outline

1. Initial Greeting (1:1–2)
2. God's Grace in Christ Is the Source of Godly Living (1:3–11)
3. Peter's Reminder to the Churches (1:12–21)
4. Evaluation of False Teachers (2:1–22)
5. The Day of the Lord Will Surely Come (3:1–13)
6. Concluding Encouragements (3:14–18)

E. 1, 2, 3 John

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

John (the Apostle), along with James the Apostle, was one of the two “sons of Zebedee,” also known as “sons of thunder”. He probably wrote his three NT letters no later than the 90s A.D. He wrote from Ephesus (in present-day western Turkey), perhaps to churches like those mentioned in Rev. 2:8–3:22. John also wrote the Fourth Gospel and the book of Revelation.

Theme of 1 John

1 John calls readers back to the three basics of Christian life: true doctrine, obedient living, and faithful devotion. Because “God is light” (1:5), Christ’s followers overcome wicked people who oppose them. God’s Son lives in and among them. He is greater than the spirit of “the antichrist” now in the world (4:3–4). **John 5:13:** ¹³ *I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life.*

Theme of 2 John

The focus of 2 John is living in God’s love according to the truth of Jesus Christ. This love extends not only to God but to others as well. It is also wise; it does not “go on ahead” of biblical revelation (v. 9). It does not aid enemies of the gospel (vv. 10–11). Instead, Christ’s followers “walk according to his commandments” (v. 6). Through faith they “win a full reward” (v. 8).

Theme of 3 John

The theme of 3 John is faithfulness despite opposition. The man who received the letter, Gaius, faces a troublemaker named Diotrefes. By “walking in the truth” (vv. 3, 4), Christians can live out the message that John teaches in all his letters.

Outline for 1 John

1. God Is Light and Christ Is the Way (1:1–2:6)
2. The Unchanging Commandment in a Changing World (2:7–17)
3. Overcoming the Antichrist by Confessing the Son (2:18–3:10)
4. Overcoming Evil by Listening to the Apostle (3:11–4:6)
5. The Assurance of God through the Love of God (4:7–21)
6. Faith in the Son as the Way to Life (5:1–12)
7. Final Call to Faith and Understanding (5:13–21)

Theological Themes of 1 John

God is light (1:5; 2:8)	God is love (4:8, 16, 19)
Christians were spiritually dead: they have “passed out of death into life” (3:14)	
God loved his people and sent Jesus to die for them (3:16; 4:10, 14, 19; 5:11)	
Christians have been born of God (2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18)	
God gave Christians life (3:14; 4:9; 5:11, 16)	
God gave Christians the Spirit (2:20, 27; 3:24; 4:13) along with understanding (5:20)	
Christians are of/from God/the truth (3:10, 19; 4:4, 6; 5:19)	
God abides in Christians, and his Word abides in them (2:14, 24, 27; 3:9, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16)	Christians abide in God, and thus abide in the light (2:5, 6, 27, 28; 3:6, 24; 4:13, 16)
Christians know God (2:13, 14; 4:6, 7), they know the Father (2:13; 5:20), they know Jesus (1:3; 2:3), and they know the Spirit (4:2, 6)	Christians love God (2:5; 4:21; 5:2, 3)
<p>Being born again, having received the Spirit, abiding in God and God abiding in them, and knowing and loving God, Christians bear observable fruit. They:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practice truth/righteousness (1:6; 2:29; 3:7, 10) • walk in the light/as he walked (1:7; 2:6) • confess sins and have forgiveness (1:9; 2:12) • keep/obey his commandments/Word (2:3, 5; 3:22, 24; 5:2, 3) • love one another/the brothers (2:10; 3:10, 11, 14, 16, 18, 23; 4:7, 11, 21) • overcome the evil one/the world (2:13, 14; 4:4; 5:4) • do the will of God/cannot keep on sinning (2:17; 3:9, 22) • confess the Son/believe in Jesus (2:23; 3:23; 4:2, 15; 5:1, 4, 13) 	

1 John 1:7-9

⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Outline for 2 John

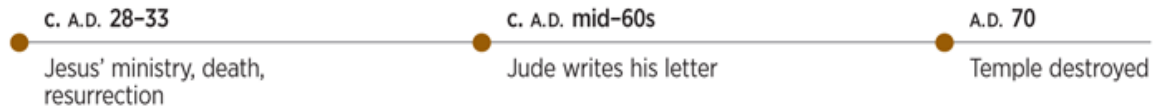
1. Greeting: The Elder's Love (vv. 1–3)
2. The Elder's Joy and Request (vv. 4–6)
3. The Elder's Concern (vv. 7–8)
4. The Elder's Warning (vv. 9–11)
5. Closing: The Elder's Farewell (vv. 12–13)

Outline for 3 John

1. Greeting: The Elder's Joy at Gaius's Faithfulness (vv. 1–4)
2. Praise for Gaius's Support for Traveling Christian Workers (vv. 5–8)
3. Concern about Diotrephes (vv. 9–10)
4. Advice and Commendation of Demetrius (vv. 11–12)
5. Closing: A Promise to Visit (vv. 13–15)

F. Jude

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipients

The book was written by Jude, the brother of James and Jesus (see Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3, where “Judas” is the same in Greek as “Jude”). Jude was probably written in the mid-60s A.D. Considering the letter’s apparent Jewish perspective, Jude’s audience was probably Jewish Christians, or a mixture of Jewish and Gentile readers where the Gentiles were familiar with Jewish traditions.

Since Jude addresses a situation similar to the one addressed by 2 Peter and exhibits a literary relationship to ch. 2 of that letter (Jude may have been a source for 2 Peter), the two letters are commonly dated in fairly close proximity, even though evidence for the date of writing within the book of Jude is sparse.

Theme

The church must defend the one true faith (v. 3). Believers must be faithful to the end by resisting false teachers and following the truth.

Purpose, Occasion, and Background

Jude warns against following false teachers who have infiltrated the church and are distorting the one true faith. Jude calls the church to defend the truth aggressively against such false teaching.

While the false teachers of Jude were profoundly libertine (morally unrestrained), it would be historically inaccurate to argue that they were Gnostics (teaching that salvation came from secret spiritual knowledge rather than faith in Christ’s atoning work). This heretical sect (or group of sects) was influential primarily from the second century A.D. onward.

Jude accomplishes his purpose by drawing analogies with OT events, using the same principles of interpretation found in 2 Peter (and elsewhere in the NT). He also draws on Jewish apocalyptic traditions from nonbiblical literature (he refers to *1 Enoch* and the *Testament of Moses*) in building his case. Thus, as literature, Jude has a distinctively Jewish flavor.

The format is of a NT epistle (letter), with its loose divisions of salutation, body, and closing. But the central unit of the letter (vv. 5–16) fits the style of a judgment oracle: it has an object of attack, an attack coming from several directions, a harsh tone, and an implied standard on which the attack is being conducted (“the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints”; v. 3). The description of those who left the faith (vv. 8–16) provides a picture of their character and actions. The use of images and allusions (e.g., to Sodom and Gomorrah and the archangel Michael) lends a poetic quality to the letter.

The writer displays horror over the apostasy and the false teachers who have caused it. The only NT passage that goes beyond Jude in these traits is Jesus' denunciation of the religious leaders in Matthew 23. But this letter begins with the usual soothing notes of NT epistles, and in the last two verses it becomes one of the most moving benedictions in the NT.

Key Themes

1. Christians need to defend the doctrines of the faith (v. 3).
2. False teachers may be identified by their immoral character (vv. 4, 8, 10, 12–13, 16, 18–19).
3. God will judge false teachers (vv. 4, 5–7, 11, 14–15).
4. Saints must endure to be saved (vv. 17–23).
5. As God grants mercy to those who are called, they must show mercy to others (vv. 2, 21–23).
6. God grants the grace to ensure that his people will persevere (vv. 1–2, 24–25).

Outline

1. Initial Greeting (vv. 1–2)
2. Jude's Appeal: Contend for the Faith (vv. 3–4)
3. The Immoral Character and Resulting Judgment of the False Teachers (vv. 5–16)
4. Concluding Exhortations (vv. 17–25)

Jude 24-25

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.