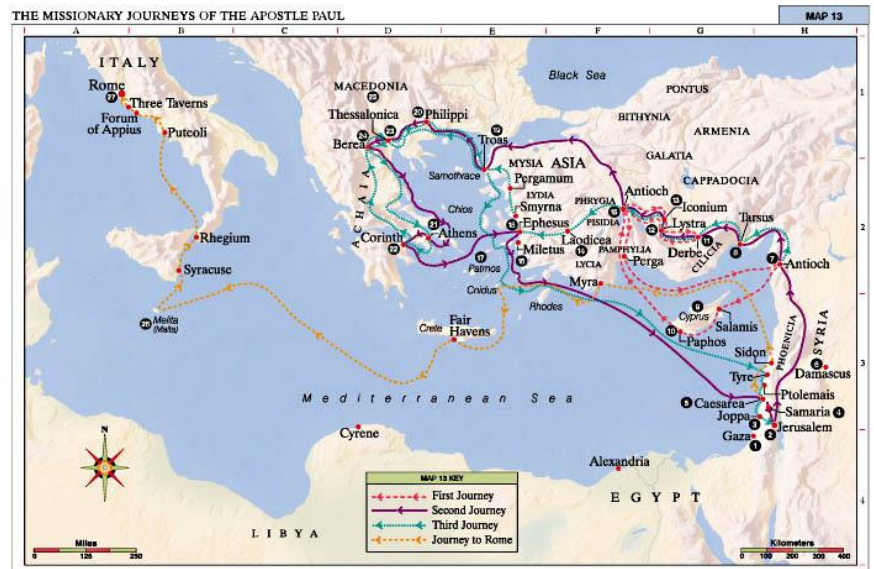




# PAULINE EPISTLES



## Romans: Gentile and Jew in Cruciform Covenant Community

- ❖ “Christ has become the servant of the circumcised on behalf of the Truth of God in order that He might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, AND in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy.” ROM 15:8-9
- ❖ Most influential letter ever written; most significant letter in Christianity; very complex
  - Spurred Augustine’s conversion (ROM 13:13-14)
  - Spawned Reformation:
    - Martin Luther
    - Philip Melanchthon
    - John Wesley (founded Methodists)
    - Swiss theologian Karl Barth, early 20th century wrote a commentary on ROM which inaugurated a theological revival
    - 1999 Roman Catholic-Lutheran “Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification”
- ❖ Theologically broad and deep; Paul’s most systematic presentation of Gospel
- ❖ Local as well, addressing problems in the Roman church
- ❖ ROM covers:
  - Grace of God toward sinful humanity for Jews and Gentiles
  - Multicultural cruciform community of obedient faith
  - Generous love and expectant hope
- ❖ Paul wrote from Corinth between AD 55-58
- ❖ Paul had never visited Rome but there was a hub of believers due to traffic between Jerusalem and Rome AND as the Gospel spread throughout the Empire, communication between believers afar to family and friends in Rome and relocations to Rome would have built up the ROM church.
- ❖ Paul knew at least 30 believers in Rome (Ch 16), 10% of the church in Rome
- ❖ **Why** did Paul write this letter? Much debated question. Possible answers:

- Friction between Gentiles and Jews - in AD 49, Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome due to controversy over "Chrestus" - an intra-Jewish debate about the Messiah. Gentiles thus constituted the bulk of the ROM church for many years (possibly the entirety of the church). Jews returned to Rome upon the death of Claudius, possibly finding differences in beliefs and customs, leading to disunity between believers. Paul describes such conflicts in Ch 14-15: disputes over diet and calendar - matters incidental to the Gospel *adiaphora* - non-essential, discretionary, neutral.
- Reasons for the letter depend upon which part of the letter the reader deems most important. Some believe Ch 1-8 and 12-15 to have the primacy, making ROM a theological treatise on justification, sanctification, and glorification: the grand story of salvation. No local story.
- Others believe CH 9-11 are the key to ROM: Paul's concern about God's fidelity and Israel's fate
- Others believe Ch 14-15 are the key: Paul's concern about factions and judgmentalism and his interest in Rome for support of his ministry
- Most believe that ROM must further his ministry of pastoral work
- It functioned as an introduction to Paul and his teaching
- He was collecting funds for the Judean Christians and sought moral and financial support
- ❖ Paul's theology always has pastoral function. The possible Gentile-Jew conflict would have been fertile ground for his profound theology about unity in the community.
- ❖ ROM can be read theologically, pastorally, rhetorically - it is all of these
- ❖ **Theme:** God's grace creates a New Covenant community of Christians (Gentile and Jew) - eschatological, emphasis on God's mercy and faithfulness, emphasis on obedience of faith
- ❖ **Thesis** of letter: ROM 1:16-17: For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written 'The one who is righteous will live by faith.'"
- ❖ **Ch 1-4:** Story of God's faithful response to faithless humanity
- ❖ **Ch 5-8:** New situation: those who are justified by faith, they die and rise with Christ and live in the Spirit
- ❖ **Ch 9-11:** Question the future fate of ethnic Israel as most Jews rejected the Gospel
- ❖ **Ch 12-15:** Need for the Roman community to embody the Gospel as they live cruciform lives of holiness and hospitality
- ❖ **Ch 15-16:** Relationship of all the foregoing to God's great story of salvation and Paul's mission within it
- ❖ Two Covenant Interpretation - to be rejected
  - Put forward by NT scholars LLOYD Gaston and John Gager
  - Hinges on Ch 2
  - Believes that Paul taught that Gentiles are saved by Christ's sacrifice - the New Covenant BUT not the Jews; they are saved by keeping the Law of the Old Covenant
  - Attempt is to save Paul and Christianity from charges of *supersessionism* and anti-Judaism with the idea that Christianity replaces Judaism rather than fulfilling and perfecting it
  - The Truth: Paul believed that keeping the Law was *adiaphora*, while faith in Jesus was central, crucial, and non-negotiable

- ❖ ROM trumpets one Gospel for Gentile and Jew alike:
  - Thematic statement that Gospel is power of salvation for all
  - Impartial criterion of judgment according to deeds
  - Theme of one God for all
  - Charge of universal enslavement to sin
  - Offer of justification and salvation to all by grace and through faith
  - Multicultural character of the Church
  - Need for Gentiles and Jews to tolerate cultural differences and welcome one another
  - Mutual benefit between Gentile and Jewish believers in the Diaspora and Jerusalem
  - Creation of one Church which calls upon the Name of Jesus
- ❖ Paul is a Jew participating in debates about what constitutes real Jewishness, what is the True Israel, and what God has done and is doing in salvation history
- ❖ Paul critiques Jews as the prophets did - for their unbelief - like Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Jeremiah, and Jesus Himself
- ❖ Paul believes that in and through Jesus, God has made a New Israel, composed of Gentiles and Jews, as prophesied by Isaiah. This True Israel is
  - Filled with the Spirit
  - Circumcised in the heart
  - Empowered to live in covenant with God and others (fulfill the Law)
  - The very blessing promised to Abraham and foretold by the prophets
  - Israel is not **replaced** but **remade, reconstituted**
  - True Israel is eschatologically inclusive rather than ethnically exclusive in conformity to the eternal purpose and promises of God - see outline of ROM pp 345-346
- ❖ **Opening:** 1:1-15 - Paul establishes his identity as an Apostle and his commonality with the Romans
  - Paul, a **doulos** “servant” or “slave” of Christ through Whom he has received grace (as have the believers in Rome) - but Paul has received the particular grace to be an Apostle
  - Ultimate identity: being called by God
  - Romans have been called by God to a life of holiness as beloved children of God; they are also **doulos** of Christ
  - Romans exemplify the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles - this is the meaning and truth of the Gospel
  - **Key terms:** faith, obedience, grace - faith and obedience are not separate terms; they require or generate each other - they are one unified response to God’s grace
  - The Gospel is the Divine and royal announcement of
    - Good news from God
    - Promised in Scripture
    - About God’s Son
    - Who is David’s descendant
    - Who is the Promised Messiah - Son of God and Lord - early creed, possibly
    - Spirit of holiness is at work in the lives of all believers
- ❖ Adoptionism = the false belief that Jesus was not always the Son of God but **became** the Son of God
- ❖ Paul’s vocabulary of Christ’s “declaration” of Sonship or Messiahship or His appointment to such describes God’s vindication of Christ’s death and the commencement of His royal Messianic reign
- ❖ As in PHIL 2:6-11 and GAL 4:4, this shows Paul’s belief in Christ as the Pre-existent Divine Son of God

- ❖ Because Paul uses an early Christian creedal statement and cites Scripture, he places himself on the same solid ground as teachers and believers in Rome. He has established rapport with Romans
- ❖ Paul then expresses thanks for the Roman believers and their faith.
- ❖ He tells them that he prays constantly for them.
- ❖ He expresses his prayer and desire that he can visit them as a fellow believer and Apostle. Fellowship is a two-way street for mutual upbuilding and encouragement. As an Apostle, he intends to impart spiritual gifts and to reap a harvest for the Lord (bear fruit). Generally, he goes to the unevangelized. In Rome, he will be teaching the converted AND converting unbelievers.
- ❖ **Paul proclaims** the Gospel: The Power of God for the salvation of all - 1:16-17 - the *propositio* of the letter. Key terms: ashamed, gospel, power, God, salvation. belief/faith (*pistous*), Jew and Greek, righteousness of God, revealed, written, one who is righteous, live.
- ❖ There is no direct reference to Christ. Is there an implicit reference to Him? In 1:16, Paul “is not ashamed of the Gospel” - inherently Christocentric - and that this Gospel is the “power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith.” The words “ashamed,” “power,” and “salvation” confirm that Paul speaks of the Crucified Messiah. This may allude to 1 COR 1:18, 21-24, 31.
- ❖ Paul actually boasts of the Crucified, far from being ashamed of the Gospel which is a powerful force which does God’s Will and does not return to Him void (ISA 55:11). It is a “performance utterance.”
- ❖ Salvation for all - to the Jew first - God’s election of Israel had in mind the ultimate inclusion of all - always understood to be a blessing to all the nations.
- ❖ Unique theology to ROM: God’s deliverance of Israel opened to everyone the good news. Condition to receive salvation: faith. Salvation and faith are complex and comprehensive. Paul will unpack their depths during the course of the letter
  - Salvation - future hope of eternal life
  - Salvation - present reality of being in right covenantal relationship with God
  - Faith - the righteousness of **God**
    - Originates in God
    - Characteristic of God - Divine quality
    - Divine activity
    - **Hesed** - God’s saving covenant faithfulness
  - Faith - the **human** response to God’s saving covenant faithfulness
    - From/through God’s **hesed** (source or agency)
    - To/for/toward the human response (goal)
  - Faith could refer to **Christ’s** faithfulness/obedience to God which wrought our salvation, rendering the sentence in 1:17 - “For in the Gospel, God’s saving covenant faithfulness is revealed through the faithfulness of Christ to generate faithfulness of those who hear it.”
- ❖ Paul restates this thesis in 3:21-26 (God’s faithfulness revealed in Christ’s death, demanding our faith response)
- ❖ Paul restates this thesis in 5:12-21 (description of Christ’s faithful/obedient death)
- ❖ Paul restates this thesis in 6:1-23 (our response in faith by obedient participation in Christ’s death)
- ❖ Paul quotes Habakkuk in the second half of 1:17 Three possible interpretations:
  - The one who is righteous by faith will live
  - The one who is righteous will live by faith
  - The one who is righteous by the faithfulness of God or Christ will live.
- ❖ Faith - *pistous* - means engagement, commitment, loyalty, fidelity, as well as intellectual assent

- ❖ Faith of this kind makes believers righteous/justified (*dik* root) - in a right covenantal relationship with God. We are not “counted” righteous - not a legal fiction. Believers become righteous and live by faith - live faithfully - in obedience to God and His Will. The ultimate result will be acquittal at judgment.
- ❖ Goal of Paul and reason for his proclamation of the Gospel: live in right relationship with God now and experience eternal life with Him.
- ❖ **God’s** faithful and merciful **response** to human sin: 1:18-4:25 (for this Session, stop at 1:32)
- ❖ Paul calls all violations of the covenant “sin” where we call them “sins”
- ❖ Jesus’ death, which embodies God’s *hesed* and mercy, break the bonds of sin and death
- ❖ Paul’s goal is pastoral: recognition of universal sin, judgment, and mercy for those with faith - this places Jewish and Gentile Christians on an equal footing:
  - In debt to God for His mercy
  - Equally children of God
  - Equally children of Abraham and inheritors of the Abrahamic Promise
- ❖ 1:18-3:20 move as a whole towards the conclusion in 3:9-20 - that all are under the power of sin; none are righteous; all are accountable to God; works of the law are not the means of justification - establishing right covenantal relationship with God. His argument is a chiasm: aba’:
  - A - the Gentile predicament (1:18-32)
  - B - God’s impartial judgment according to deeds (2:1-16)
  - A’ - the Jewish predicament (2:17-3:8)
- ❖ All people are covenantally dysfunctional - unwilling and unable to live in right relationship with God and others - and they are without excuse. Apparently Paul’s reinterpretation of WIS 11-19.
- ❖ Apart from Christ, Gentiles are evil and God is faithful; Jews are not preserved from Divine judgment.
- ❖ Paul’s pastoral concern is for the behavior of believers *in Christ*.
- ❖ The cause and manifestation of God’s wrath - His righteous response to human idolatry, immorality, and injustice. These represent violations of the covenant’s two great commandments: love God and love your neighbor. People lacked piety and justice.
- ❖ Common in Judaism to charge Gentiles with idolatry and immorality (especially sexual immorality)
- ❖ Paul is also charging the Gentiles with idolatry and immorality - but he is also charging the Jews. They will not see themselves explicitly in this letter until Chapter 3.
- ❖ Paul speaks of the Jewish covenant. He does not mention (or does not know) about the Seven “Noahide” commandments for the Gentiles (from the time of Noah)
- ❖ Basic error: idolatry. All other problems/sin devolve from idolatry.
- ❖ God’s invisible, eternal power and Divinity can be discerned from nature. All are without excuse for not knowing, honoring, and thanking God. Their minds were darkened by this sin and they fell into immorality.
- ❖ “God gave them up” from idolatry to immorality - Paul states this three times. God allows human folly to run its course to its inevitable end - this is the revelation of God’s wrath.
- ❖ The exchange of Truth about God led to the exchange of Truth about God’s creatures, including our fellow human beings; natural intercourse was exchanged for unnatural intercourse - contrary to the truths revealed in Creation.

- ❖ Paul lists 20 other sins, but his main concern is the Gentile predicament, not individual sins. 1:29-31 unleashes a flood of evils which are symptomatic of comprehensive cancer which affects body, mind, heart, and soul of every individual and in community relations. This moral chaos leads to death.
  - Idolatry leads to darkening of the mind AND leads to
  - Immorality leads to breakdown of individual heart, mind, soul AND leads to
  - Breakdown in society such that we applaud/approve of each other's sins AND
  - Brings upon us God's wrath/judgment
- ❖ Chapters 2 through 8 to be covered in Session 12

### **ROM Chapters 14 - 16** Hospitality: A community of Jews and Gentiles (14:1 - 15:13)

- ❖ Paul speaks to the conflicts in the Roman church about diet and calendar -this section is the *climax*, the goal towards which Paul has been building in this Gentile and Jew section of the letter.
- ❖ **Key** word for Paul: hospitality or welcome - welcome one another as Christ welcomed you.
- ❖ Paul's mission to proclaim the Messiah to the Gentiles does not exclude the Jews. He seeks to unify the fractured, multicultural community. He draws on 1 COR 8:1-11:1.
- ❖ Paul speaks of the "weak in faith" and the "strong" - those observant of diet and calendar and the non-observant. This is a plea for patience and tolerance and to avoid prejudice. Paul addresses both the specific situation in Rome at the time and enunciates general principles:
  - Consider yourselves brothers and sisters
  - Both serve Christ
  - Called to live in harmony through Christlike love
- ❖ "Weak" or observant believers abstain from meat and wine, judge one day to be better than others, and observe special holidays.
  - Not restricted to ethnic Jews
  - God-fearers and
  - Pagans who wanted to completely forsake paganism by observing strict diet and calendar
- ❖ "Strong" or non-observant eat and drink anything and do not observe special holidays.
  - Not restricted to Gentiles
  - Ethnic Jews may have wanted the freedom Christianity gave them from diet and calendar
- ❖ Paul is not the Apostle of post-modernism or laissez-faire. It's not "anything goes."
- ❖ Paul addresses the *adiaphora* - the non-essentials. Diet and calendar are not the Gospel.
- ❖ Paul does not advocate: you do you or private conscience over revealed Truth. Although these are non-essential issues, he is pastorally concerned for the community as a whole and for the glory of God, which is undercut by this internal strife and is a scandal to believers and non-believers alike.
- ❖ Paul requires:
  - Multicultural cruciform hospitality which accepts diversity in non-essential matters;
  - Cruciform self-denial for the good of others
  - Praise God through obedience to Christ
  - Burden is on the strong, but the weak have responsibilities as well
- ❖ **14:1-12**, Paul paints a picture of the Roman church in view of service and accountability to the Lord

- ❖ Two points are made:
  - Judgmentalism does not reflect the welcome of God in Christ
  - Each believer is accountable for their actions(in life and death) to the Lord.
    - Believers live to/for Christ.
    - This is how they live to God.
    - Seek to honor God in everything you do.
    - Glorify God in Christ. This is the criterion for judgment we all must face.
- ❖ **14:13-23** - Words directed to the strong which echo 1 COR 8. The strong may be an obstacle to the weak and a cause for scandal. They may be leading the weak astray. While in Christ no food is unclean, charity in Christ demands that they curtail their freedom for the good of the others. This is the Kingdom of God: love seeking the good of the other. Only those who walk in cruciform love, conformed to Christ through the power of the Spirit, enjoy the Presence and blessings of the Triune God.
- ❖ **15:1-13** - Cruciform Hospitality - call to harmony and hospitality. Paul structures this in parallel form, beginning with an exhortation, then an appeal to Christ, a warrant in Scripture, and a closing prayer.
- ❖ Paul identifies with the strong and calls upon them to “put on the failings of the weak” rather than pleasing themselves. It is a call to unity in love.
- ❖ Bearing others’ burdens follows the Master. Loving others is loving Christ. A loving, Christlike community is possible only when all believers follow Christ. “Pleasing others” means building them up in love, not caving in to their whims or affirming them in their sins. He cites Psalm 69, commonly associated with Christ’s death: Christ absorbed the insults of those who had insulted God. Jesus freely chose a prayerful attitude of obedience to God; we are called to do likewise.
- ❖ Paul prays for harmony in life and in liturgy. He exhorts ROM to hospitality grounded in Christ and aimed at the glory of God. Scriptural citations follow about the plan of God for Gentiles to join Jews in glorifying God.
- ❖ Christ became obedient to God for the benefit of the Jews in fulfillment of the patriarchal promises, which were meant to extend to all the nations. This is the **THEME** of the letter: God’s faithfulness to the Jews and mercy to the Gentiles.
- ❖ Scriptural citations come from Law, Prophets, Writings (DT, Isaiah, Psalms) - Greek version
- ❖ Gentile and Jewish Christians must embody this wisdom of God in His economy of salvation by accepting one another as different but equal children of God. Then they can experience faith, joy, peace, and hope.
- ❖ **15:14-33**: Paul’s Mission and Plan as one aspect of God’s plan in the world.
- ❖ Paul writes boldly to people he has not met to remind them of what they know to be true. This is part of his priestly ministry - his offering to God (the Gentiles). He must ensure that this offering is holy, blameless, and acceptable to the Lord. He wants to boast in what Christ has accomplished among the Gentiles through Paul. Paul’s work is proclamation, signs, and wonders. He sees his ministry to the Gentiles as fulfillment of ISA 52:15.
- ❖ Paul’s specific mission is to the unconverted Gentiles, which has kept him from Rome. His letter goes ahead of his visit to acquaint the Romans with him and his preaching. He plans to pass through Rome on his way to Spain. He hopes to get to know the community, to help where he can, and to gain a missionary base of support: prayers, finances, and companions.
- ❖ Generosity to fellow believers and to apostolic work is important. Paul knows that Gentiles and Jews must be unified across the world, so sharing the prayers and resources with each other by helping in mission work is crucial.

- ❖ Jerusalem collection:
  - Took many years for Paul to accumulate and deliver
  - Unified believers
  - Paid Gentile debt to Jewish faith
  - Jewish Christians grateful to their Gentiles brethren
  - All praise and glorify God
- ❖ If Romans provide a missionary base for Paul, they can share in the proclamation of the Gospel in the West (Spain was the western-most extent of the Roman Empire). They can pray for Paul's protection and success.
- ❖ **16:1-27** - Closing - Paul greets about 30 believers in Rome whom he already knows, adds final instructions, and closes with a doxology. His list includes at least nine women who have helped him in his ministry. See chart pp 403-405 for a partial list of those Paul knew and their relationship to him.
- ❖ The list includes Gentiles, Jews, slaves, freed persons, rich, poor, men, women, from all corners of the Empire. They are apostles in Christ, fellow prisoners, those who have been "in Christ" longer than Paul; those whom he converted; fellow tentmakers. Paul sends the letter with Phoebe, who would be expected to proclaim it as well.
- ❖ The doxology links the prophets to Paul's apostleship, and links both to the Gentiles. It repeats the purpose of Paul's mission and "the obedience of faith" which began the letter.