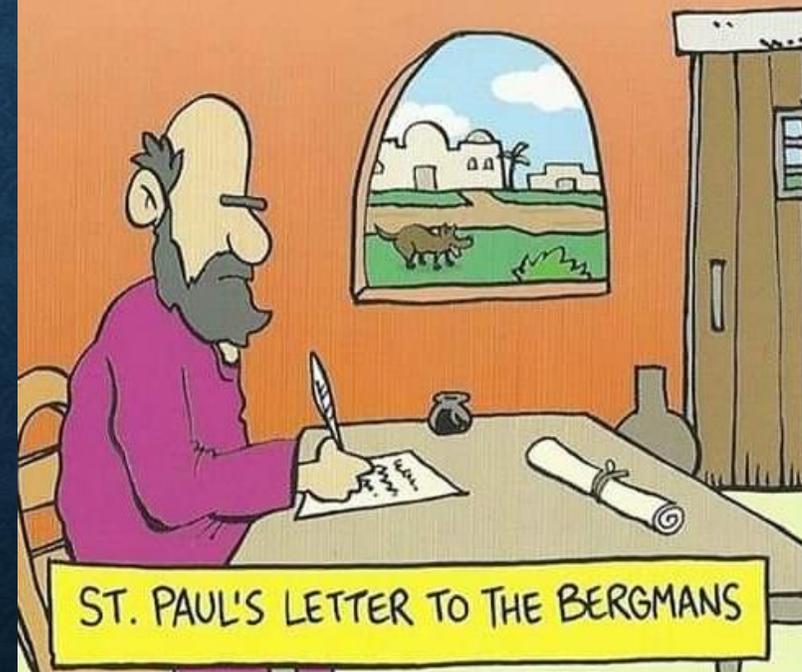


THE LETTERS OF PAUL

PART 1

PAUL WRITES LETTERS

I, Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus,
greet you in the name of the Lord,
and ask you to keep your dog
out of my petunias.



But How Many Letters?

- 13 letters in the New Testament claim Paul as their author

Undisputed

- Romans
- 1st Corinthians
- 2nd Corinthians
- Philippians
- 1st Thessalonians
- Galatians
- Philemon

Disputed

- 2nd Thessalonians
- Ephesians
- Colossians
- 1st Timothy
- 2nd Timothy
- Titus

...plus an unknown number of “lost” letters

Paul Writes Letters

- Understanding Paul's writings requires taking their form seriously
- Letters function differently than narratives (e.g., the Gospels and Acts)
- Letter writing was considered an art form in Greco-Roman society
- Paul both uses and modifies the traditional form of a Roman letter

Form: The Opening

- Sender
 - Recipients
 - Greeting
 - Prayer of Thanksgiving
-
- These elements vary depending on Paul's relationship to the readers or the situation prompting the letter

¹Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes,

²To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

³Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

⁴I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— ⁶just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— ⁷so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Form: The Closing

- Paul's letters include unusually lengthy closings
 - Recap of the theme
 - Final encouragements
 - Greetings to individuals
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- These lengthy closings serve to nurture and reinforce the relationships Paul has with the addressees

- ¹³Keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love. ¹⁵Now, brothers and sisters, you know that members of the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; ¹⁶I urge you to put yourselves at the service of such people, and of everyone who works and toils with them. ¹⁷I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; ¹⁸for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. So give recognition to such persons.
- ¹⁹The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, greet you warmly in the Lord. ²⁰All the brothers and sisters send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. ²¹I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. ²²Let anyone be accursed who has no love for the Lord. Our Lord, come! ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴My love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

Form: The Body

- Begins with either a disclosure (“I want you to know, brothers and sisters...”) [Romans, 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians]
- ...or an appeal (“Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters...”) [1st Corinthians, Philemon]
- Introduces the theme of the letter and lays foundation of mutuality
- Address to “brothers and sisters” (Gk: *adelphoi*) balances assertion of authority

Form: The Body

- Letters are always surrogates for a visit
- Body of the letter contains the instruction Paul would give if he could be present in person
- Intensely situational, that is, written in response to a particular set of circumstances
- Often carry the promise of a future visit or reference to the courier as spokesperson

Form: The Body

- Response to the situational context is followed by or interwoven with moral exhortation and instruction
- Paul draws from Jewish, Christian, and pagan sources for this material
- This material is intended as an expression of pastoral concern and a concrete application of the arguments Paul makes in the letter

Dating Paul

- Paul's letters are generally dated to between 50 and 65 AD
- This makes them the oldest material in the NT
- 1 Thessalonians is generally acknowledged as the oldest
- Canonical order is based on length, not on chronology

Paul's Use of Rhetoric

- Paul uses standard tools of classical rhetoric to make his points
- *Ethos*: establishing Paul's trustworthiness via his resumé
- *Pathos*: an appeal to the emotions of the reader/hearer
- *Logos*: an appeal to logic or a reasoned argument

Paul's Use of Diatribe

- Use of an imaginary dialogue partner
- Often posed as questions and answers
- Corrects inadequate or incorrect views or conclusions

Paul's Use of Diatribe: Romans 3

3:1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? **2** Much, in every way. For in the first place the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. **3** What if some were unfaithful? Will their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? **4** By no means! Although everyone is a liar, let God be proved true, as it is written, "So that you may be justified in your words, and prevail in your judging." **5** But if our injustice serves to confirm the justice of God, what should we say? That God is unjust to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) **6** By no means! For then how could God judge the world? **7** But if through my falsehood God's truthfulness abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? **8** And why not say (as some people slander us by saying that we say), "Let us do evil so that good may come"? Their condemnation is deserved! **9** What then? Are we any better off? No, not at all; for we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin... (Romans 3:1-9)

Paul's Use of Autobiography

- Paul often describes his own history in support of his arguments
- Rhetorically, these passages serve to describe him as the embodiment of his professed theology
- Paul's life is an *illustration* of the gospel he preaches
- Paul *practices* what he preaches

If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith...

¹⁷Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. (Philippians 3:4-9, 17)



Paul's Churches

- With the exception of Romans, the undisputed letters are written to churches that Paul planted
- These communities appear to have been widely diverse in ethnicity, social strata, gender, and leadership
- All appear to have been urban in nature
- Paul's letters often address apparent social friction within the communities