

TYNDALE



CORNERSTONE

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Romans

Roger Mohrlang

Galatians

Gerald Borchert

GENERAL EDITOR

Philip W. Comfort

WITH THE ENTIRE TEXT OF THE
 New Living
Translation

CORNERSTONE
B I B L I C A L
COMMENTARY

General Editor

Philip W. Comfort

D. Litt. et Phil., University of South Africa;

Tyndale House Publishers;

Coastal Carolina University.

Consulting Editor, Old Testament

Tremper Longman III

PhD, Yale University;

Robert H. Gundry Professor of Biblical Studies, Westmont College.

Consulting Editor, New Testament

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Professor of New Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

Associate Editors

Jason Driesbach

MA, Biblical Exegesis and Linguistics, Dallas Theological Seminary;

Tyndale House Publishers.

Mark R. Norton

MA, Theological Studies, Wheaton Graduate School;

Tyndale House Publishers.

James A. Swanson

MSM, Multnomah Biblical Seminary;

MTh, University of South Africa;

Tyndale House Publishers.



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Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Volume 14

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C O N T E N T S

Contributors to Volume 14

vi

General Editor's Preface

vii

Abbreviations

ix

Transliteration and Numbering System

xiii

ROMANS

1

GALATIANS

245

CONTRIBUTORS TO VOLUME 14

Romans: Roger Mohrlang

BS, Carnegie Institute of Technology/Carnegie Mellon University;

MA, Fuller Theological Seminary;

DPhil, University of Oxford;

Professor of Biblical Studies, Whitworth College.

Galatians: Gerald L. Borchert

BA, LLB, University of Alberta Law School;

MDiv, Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary;

ThM, PhD, Princeton Theological Seminary and Princeton University;

Retired Professor of New Testament and Director of Doctoral Studies,

Northern Baptist Theological Seminary.

GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* is based on the second edition of the New Living Translation (2004). Nearly 100 scholars from various church backgrounds and from several countries (United States, Canada, England, and Australia) participated in the creation of the NLT. Many of these same scholars are contributors to this commentary series. All the commentators, whether participants in the NLT or not, believe that the Bible is God's inspired word and have a desire to make God's word clear and accessible to his people.

This Bible commentary is the natural extension of our vision for the New Living Translation, which we believe is both exegetically accurate and idiomatically powerful. The NLT attempts to communicate God's inspired word in a lucid English translation of the original languages so that English readers can understand and appreciate the thought of the original writers. In the same way, the *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary* aims at helping teachers, pastors, students, and lay people understand every thought contained in the Bible. As such, the commentary focuses first on the words of Scripture, then on the theological truths of Scripture—inasmuch as the words express the truths.

The commentary itself has been structured in such a way as to help readers get at the meaning of Scripture, passage by passage, through the entire Bible. Each Bible book is prefaced by a substantial book introduction that gives general historical background important for understanding. Then the reader is taken through the Bible text, passage by passage, starting with the New Living Translation text printed in full. This is followed by a section called "Notes," wherein the commentator helps the reader understand the Hebrew or Greek behind the English of the NLT, interacts with other scholars on important interpretive issues, and points the reader to significant textual and contextual matters. The "Notes" are followed by the "Commentary," wherein each scholar presents a lucid interpretation of the passage, giving special attention to context and major theological themes.

The commentators represent a wide spectrum of theological positions within the evangelical community. We believe this is good because it reflects the rich variety in Christ's church. All the commentators uphold the authority of God's word and believe it is essential to heed the old adage: "Wholly apply yourself to the Scriptures and apply them wholly to you." May this commentary help you know the truths of Scripture, and may this knowledge help you "grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord" (2 Pet 1:2, NLT).

PHILIP W. COMFORT
GENERAL EDITOR

ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL ABBREVIATIONS

b.	Babylonian Gemara	Heb.	Hebrew	NT	New Testament
bar.	baraita	ibid.	<i>ibidem</i> , in the same place	OL	Old Latin
c.	<i>circa</i> , around, approximately	i.e.	<i>id est</i> , the same	OS	Old Syriac
cf.	<i>confer</i> , compare	in loc.	<i>in loco</i> , in the place cited	OT	Old Testament
ch, chs	chapter, chapters	lit.	literally	p., pp.	page, pages
contra	in contrast to	LXX	Septuagint	pl.	plural
DSS	Dead Sea Scrolls	Ⲛ	Majority Text	Q	Quelle ("Sayings" as Gospel source)
ed.	edition, editor	m.	Mishnah	rev.	revision
e.g.	<i>exempli gratia</i> , for example	masc.	masculine	sg.	singular
et al.	<i>et alii</i> , and others	mg	margin	t.	Tosefta
fem.	feminine	ms	manuscript	TR	Textus Receptus
ff	following (verses, pages)	mss	manuscripts	v., vv.	verse, verses
fl.	flourished	MT	Masoretic Text	vid.	<i>videur</i> , it seems
Gr.	Greek	n.d.	no date	viz.	<i>videlicet</i> , namely
		neut.	neuter	vol.	volume
		no.	number	γ.	Jerusalem Gemara

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLE TRANSLATIONS

ASV	American Standard Version	NCV	New Century Version	NKJV	New King James Version
CEV	Contemporary English Version	NEB	New English Bible	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
ESV	English Standard Version	NIV	New International Version	NLT	New Living Translation
GW	God's Word	NIrV	New International Reader's Version	REB	Revised English Bible
HCSB	Holman Christian Standard Bible	NJB	New Jerusalem Bible	RSV	Revised Standard Version
JB	Jerusalem Bible	NJPS	The New Jewish Publication Society Translation	TEV	Today's English Version
KJV	King James Version		(<i>Tanakh</i>)	TLB	The Living Bible
NAB	New American Bible				
NASB	New American Standard Bible				

ABBREVIATIONS FOR DICTIONARIES, LEXICONS, COLLECTIONS OF TEXTS, ORIGINAL LANGUAGE EDITIONS

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols., Freedman) [1992]	BAGD	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 2nd ed. (Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker) [1979]	BDB	<i>A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament</i> (Brown, Driver, Briggs) [1907]
ANEP	<i>The Ancient Near East in Pictures</i> (Pritchard) [1965]	BDAG	<i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , 3rd ed. (Bauer, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich) [2000]	BDFA	<i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Blass, Debrunner, Funk) [1961]
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament</i> (Pritchard) [1969]				

- BHS *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Elliger and Rudolph) [1983]
- CAD *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* [1956]
- COS *The Context of Scripture* (3 vols., Hallo and Younger) [1997–2002]
- DBI *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Ryken, Wilhoit, Longman) [1998]
- DBT *Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (2nd ed., Leon-Dufour) [1972]
- DCH *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (5 vols., D. Clines) [2000]
- DJD *Discoveries in the Judean Desert* [1955–]
- DJG *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Green, McKnight, Marshall) [1992]
- DOTP *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*. (T. Alexander, D.W. Baker) [2003]
- DPL *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Hawthorne, Martin, Reid) [1993]
- EDNT *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (3 vols., H. Balz, G. Schneider. ET) [1990–1993]
- HALOT *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (L. Koehler, W. Baumgartner, J. Stamm; trans. M. Richardson) [1994–1999]
- IBD *Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (3 vols., Douglas, Wiseman) [1980]
- IDB *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (4 vols., Buttrick) [1962]
- ISBE *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (4 vols., Bromiley) [1979–1988]
- KBL *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti libros* (Koehler, Baumgartner) [1958]
- LCL Loeb Classical Library
- L&N *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (Louw and Nida) [1989]
- LSJ *A Greek-English Lexicon* (9th ed., Liddell, Scott, Jones) [1996]
- MM *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* (Moulton and Milligan) [1930; 1997]
- NA²⁶ *Novum Testamentum Graece* (26th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1979]
- NA²⁷ *Novum Testamentum Graece* (27th ed., Nestle-Aland) [1993]
- NBD *New Bible Dictionary* (2nd ed., Douglas, Hillyer) [1982]
- NIDB *New International Dictionary of the Bible* (Douglas, Tenney) [1987]
- NIDBA *New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Blaiklock and Harrison) [1983]
- NIDNTT *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (4 vols., C. Brown) [1975–1985]
- NIDOTTE *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (5 vols., W. A. VanGemeren) [1997]
- PGM *Papyri graecae magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. (Preisendanz) [1928]
- PG *Patrologia Graecae* (J. P. Migne) [1857–1886]
- TBD *Tyndale Bible Dictionary* (Elwell, Comfort) [2001]
- TDNT *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols., Kittel, Friedrich; trans. Bromiley) [1964–1976]
- TDOT *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (8 vols., Botterweck, Ringgren; trans. Willis, Bromiley, Green) [1974–]
- TLNT *Theological Lexicon of the New Testament* (3 vols., C. Spicq) [1994]
- TLOT *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (3 vols., E. Jenni) [1997]
- TWOT *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (2 vols., Harris, Archer) [1980]
- UBS³ *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (3rd ed., Metzger et al.) [1975]
- UBS⁴ *United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (4th corrected ed., Metzger et al.) [1993]
- WH *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Westcott and Hort) [1882]

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

Old Testament

Gen	Genesis	1 Sam	1 Samuel	Esth	Esther
Exod	Exodus	2 Sam	2 Samuel	Ps, Pss	Psalms, Psalms
Lev	Leviticus	1 Kgs	1 Kings	Prov	Proverbs
Num	Numbers	2 Kgs	2 Kings	Eccl	Ecclesiastes
Deut	Deuteronomy	1 Chr	1 Chronicles	Song	Song of Songs
Josh	Joshua	2 Chr	2 Chronicles	Isa	Isaiah
Judg	Judges	Ezra	Ezra	Jer	Jeremiah
Ruth	Ruth	Neh	Nehemiah	Lam	Lamentations

Ezek	Ezekiel	Obad	Obadiah	Zeph	Zephaniah
Dan	Daniel	Jonah	Jonah	Hag	Haggai
Hos	Hosea	Mic	Micah	Zech	Zechariah
Joel	Joel	Nah	Nahum	Mal	Malachi
Amos	Amos	Hab	Habakkuk		

New Testament

Matt	Matthew	Eph	Ephesians	Heb	Hebrews
Mark	Mark	Phil	Philippians	Jas	James
Luke	Luke	Col	Colossians	1 Pet	1 Peter
John	John	1 Thess	1 Thessalonians	2 Pet	2 Peter
Acts	Acts	2 Thess	2 Thessalonians	1 John	1 John
Rom	Romans	1 Tim	1 Timothy	2 John	2 John
1 Cor	1 Corinthians	2 Tim	2 Timothy	3 John	3 John
2 Cor	2 Corinthians	Titus	Titus	Jude	Jude
Gal	Galatians	Phlm	Philemon	Rev	Revelation

Deuterocanonical

Bar	Baruch	1–2 Esdr	1–2 Esdras	Pr Man	Prayer of Manasseh
Add Dan	Additions to Daniel	Add Esth	Additions to Esther	Ps 151	Psalms 151
Pr Azar	Prayer of Azariah	Ep Jer	Epistle of Jeremiah	Sir	Sirach
Bel	Bel and the Dragon	Jdt	Judith	Tob	Tobit
Sg Three	Song of the Three Children	1–2 Macc	1–2 Maccabees	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon
Sus	Susanna	3–4 Macc	3–4 Maccabees		

MANUSCRIPTS AND LITERATURE FROM QUMRAN

Initial numerals followed by "Q" indicate particular caves at Qumran. For example, the notation 4Q267 indicates text 267 from cave 4 at Qumran. Further, 1QS 4:9-10 indicates column 4, lines 9-10 of the *Rule of the Community*; and 4Q166 1 ii 2 indicates fragment 1, column ii, line 2 of text 166 from cave 4. More examples of common abbreviations are listed below.

CD	Cairo Geniza copy of the <i>Damascus Document</i>	1QIsa ^b	Isaiah copy ^b	4QLam ^a	Lamentations
		1QM	<i>War Scroll</i>	11QP ^s ^a	Psalms
1QH	<i>Thanksgiving Hymns</i>	1QpHab	<i>Peshar Habakkuk</i>	11QTemple ^{a,b}	<i>Temple Scroll</i>
1QIsa ^a	Isaiah copy ^a	1QS	<i>Rule of the Community</i>	11QtgJob	<i>Targum of Job</i>

IMPORTANT NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

(all dates given are AD; ordinal numbers refer to centuries)

Significant Papyri (P = Papyrus)

P1 Matt 1; early 3rd	P20 James 2-3; 3rd	P39 John 8; first half of 3rd
P4+P64+P67 Matt 3, 5, 26; Luke 1-6; late 2nd	P22 John 15-16; mid 3rd	P40 Rom 1-4, 6, 9; 3rd
P5 John 1, 16, 20; early 3rd	P23 James 1; c. 200	P45 Gospels and Acts; early 3rd
P13 Heb 2-5, 10-12; early 3rd	P27 Rom 8-9; 3rd	P46 Paul's Major Epistles (less Pastorals); late 2nd
P15+P16 (probably part of same codex) 1 Cor 7-8, Phil 3-4; late 3rd	P30 1 Thess 4-5; 2 Thess 1; early 3rd	P47 Rev 9-17; 3rd
	P32 Titus 1-2; late 2nd	
	P37 Matt 26; late 3rd	

- P49+P65 Eph 4-5; 1 Thess 1-2; 3rd
 P52 John 18; c. 125
 P53 Matt 26, Acts 9-10; middle 3rd
 P66 John; late 2nd
 P70 Matt 2-3, 11-12, 24; 3rd
 P72 1-2 Peter, Jude; c. 300
 P74 Acts, General Epistles; 7th
 P75 Luke and John; c. 200
 P77+P103 (probably part of same codex) Matt 13-14, 23; late 2nd
 P87 Phlm; late 2nd
 P90 John 18-19; late 2nd
 P91 Acts 2-3; 3rd
 P92 Eph 1, 2 Thess 1; c. 300
 P98 Rev 1:13-20; late 2nd
 P100 James 3-5; c. 300
 P101 Matt 3-4; 3rd
 P104 Matt 21; 2nd
 P106 John 1; 3rd
 P115 Rev 2-3, 5-6, 8-15; 3rd

Significant Uncials

- Ⲙ (Sinaiticus) most of NT; 4th
 A (Alexandrinus) most of NT; 5th
 B (Vaticanus) most of NT; 4th
 C (Ephraemi Rescriptus) most of NT with many lacunae; 5th
 D (Bezae) Gospels, Acts; 5th
 D (Claromontanus), Paul's Epistles; 6th (different MS than Bezae)
 E (Laudianus 35) Acts; 6th
 F (Augensis) Paul's Epistles; 9th
 G (Boernerianus) Paul's Epistles; 9th
 H (Coislinianus) Paul's Epistles; 6th
 I (Freerianus or Washington) Paul's Epistles; 5th
 L (Regius) Gospels; 8th
 Q (Guelferbytanus B) Luke, John; 5th
 P (Porphyrrianus) Acts—Revelation; 9th
 T (Borgianus) Luke, John; 5th
 W (Washingtonianus or the Freer Gospels) Gospels; 5th
 Z (Dublinensis) Matthew; 6th
 037 (Δ; Sangallensis) Gospels; 9th
 038 (Θ; Koridethi) Gospels; 9th
 040 (Ξ; Zacynthius) Luke; 6th
 043 (Φ; Beratinus) Matt, Mark; 6th
 044 (Ψ; Athous Laurae) Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 9th
 048 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 5th
 0171 Matt 10, Luke 22; c. 300
 0189 Acts 5; c. 200

Significant Minuscules

- 1 Gospels, Acts, Paul's Epistles; 12th
 33 All NT except Rev; 9th
 81 Acts, Paul's Epistles, General Epistles; 1044
 565 Gospels; 9th
 700 Gospels; 11th
 1424 (or Family 1424—a group of 29 manuscripts sharing nearly the same text) most of NT; 9th-10th
 1739 Acts, Paul's Epistles; 10th
 2053 Rev; 13th
 2344 Rev; 11th
 f¹ (a family of manuscripts including 1, 118, 131, 209) Gospels; 12th-14th
 f¹³ (a family of manuscripts including 13, 69, 124, 174, 230, 346, 543, 788, 826, 828, 983, 1689, 1709—known as the Ferrar group) Gospels; 11th-15th

Significant Ancient Versions

- SYRIAC (SYR)
 syr^c (Syriac Curetonian) Gospels; 5th
 syr^s (Syriac Sinaiticus) Gospels; 4th
 syr^h (Syriac Harklensis) Entire NT; 616
 OLD LATIN (IT)
 it^a (Vercellenis) Gospels; 4th
 it^b (Veronensis) Gospels; 5th
 it^d (Cantabrigiensis—the Latin text of Bezae) Gospels, Acts, 3 John; 5th
 it^e (Palantinus) Gospels; 5th
 it^k (Bobiensis) Matthew, Mark; c. 400
 COPTIC (COP)
 cop^{bo} (Boharic—north Egypt)
 cop^{fav} (Fayyumic—central Egypt)
 cop^{sa} (Sahidic—southern Egypt)
 OTHER VERSIONS
 arm (Armenian)
 eth (Ethiopic)
 geo (Georgian)

TRANSLITERATION AND NUMBERING SYSTEM

Note: For words and roots from non-biblical languages (e.g., Arabic, Ugaritic), only approximate transliterations are given.

HEBREW/ARAMAIC

Consonants

א	<i>aleph</i>	= '	מ, ם	<i>mem</i>	= <i>m</i>
ב, ן	<i>beth</i>	= <i>b</i>	נ, ן	<i>nun</i>	= <i>n</i>
ג, ן	<i>gimel</i>	= <i>g</i>	ס	<i>samekh</i>	= <i>s</i>
ד, ך	<i>daleth</i>	= <i>d</i>	ע	<i>ayin</i>	= '
ה	<i>he</i>	= <i>h</i>	פ, ן, ף	<i>pe</i>	= <i>p</i>
ו	<i>waw</i>	= <i>w</i>	צ, ץ	<i>tsadhe</i>	= <i>ts</i>
ז	<i>zayin</i>	= <i>z</i>	ק	<i>qoph</i>	= <i>q</i>
ח	<i>heth</i>	= <i>kh</i>	ר	<i>resh</i>	= <i>r</i>
ט	<i>teth</i>	= <i>t</i>	ש	<i>shin</i>	= <i>sh</i>
י	<i>yodh</i>	= <i>y</i>	שׁ	<i>sin</i>	= <i>s</i>
כ, ן, ך	<i>kaph</i>	= <i>k</i>	ת, ך	<i>taw</i>	= <i>t, th</i> (spirant)
ל	<i>lamedh</i>	= <i>l</i>			

Vowels

ַ	<i>patakh</i>	= <i>a</i>	ֿ	<i>qamets khatuf</i>	= <i>o</i>
ְ	<i>furtive patakh</i>	= <i>a</i>	ֹ	<i>holem</i>	= <i>o</i>
ֶ	<i>qamets</i>	= <i>a</i>	ֻ	<i>full holem</i>	= <i>o</i>
ֵ	<i>final qamets he</i>	= <i>ah</i>	ִ	<i>short qibbutz</i>	= <i>u</i>
ִ	<i>segol</i>	= <i>e</i>	ֶ	<i>long qibbutz</i>	= <i>u</i>
ִ	<i>tsere</i>	= <i>e</i>	ֶ	<i>shureq</i>	= <i>u</i>
ִ	<i>tsere yod</i>	= <i>e</i>	ֶ	<i>khatuf patakh</i>	= <i>a</i>
ִ	<i>short hireq</i>	= <i>i</i>	ֶ	<i>khatuf qamets</i>	= <i>o</i>
ִ	<i>long hireq</i>	= <i>i</i>	ֶ	<i>vocalic shewa</i>	= <i>e</i>
ִ	<i>hireq yod</i>	= <i>i</i>	ֶ	<i>patakh yodh</i>	= <i>a</i>

Greek

α	<i>alpha</i>	= <i>a</i>	ε	<i>epsilon</i>	= <i>e</i>
β	<i>beta</i>	= <i>b</i>	ζ	<i>zeta</i>	= <i>z</i>
γ	<i>gamma</i>	= <i>g, n</i> (before γ, κ, ξ, χ)	η	<i>eta</i>	= <i>ē</i>
δ	<i>delta</i>	= <i>d</i>	θ	<i>theta</i>	= <i>th</i>
			ι	<i>iota</i>	= <i>i</i>

κ	<i>kappa</i>	= k	τ	<i>tau</i>	= t
λ	<i>lamda</i>	= l	υ	<i>upsilon</i>	= u
μ	<i>mu</i>	= m	φ	<i>phi</i>	= ph
ν	<i>nu</i>	= n	χ	<i>chi</i>	= ch
ξ	<i>ksi</i>	= x	ψ	<i>psi</i>	= ps
ο	<i>omicron</i>	= o	ω	<i>omega</i>	= ō
π	<i>pi</i>	= p	·	<i>rough</i>	= h (with
ρ	<i>rho</i>	= r (ῥ = rh)		<i>breathing</i>	vowel or
σ, ς	<i>sigma</i>	= s		<i>mark</i>	diphthong)

THE TYNDALE-STRONG'S NUMBERING SYSTEM

The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series uses a word-study numbering system to give both newer and more advanced Bible students alike quicker, more convenient access to helpful original-language tools (e.g., concordances, lexicons, and theological dictionaries). Those who are unfamiliar with the ancient Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek alphabets can quickly find information on a given word by looking up the appropriate index number. Advanced students will find the system helpful because it allows them to quickly find the lexical form of obscure conjugations and inflections.

There are two main numbering systems used for biblical words today. The one familiar to most people is the Strong's numbering system (made popular by the *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance to the Bible*). Although the original Strong's system is still quite useful, the most up-to-date research has shed new light on the biblical languages and allows for more precision than is found in the original Strong's system. The Cornerstone Biblical Commentary series, therefore, features a newly revised version of the Strong's system, the Tyndale-Strong's numbering system. The Tyndale-Strong's system brings together the familiarity of the Strong's system and the best of modern scholarship. In most cases, the original Strong's numbers are preserved. In places where new research dictates, new or related numbers have been added.¹

The second major numbering system today is the Goodrick-Kohlenberger system used in a number of study tools published by Zondervan. In order to give students broad access to a number of helpful tools, the Commentary provides index numbers for the Zondervan system as well.

The different index systems are designated as follows:

TG	Tyndale-Strong's Greek number	ZH	Zondervan Hebrew number
ZG	Zondervan Greek number	TA	Tyndale-Strong's Aramaic number
TH	Tyndale-Strong's Hebrew number	ZA	Zondervan Aramaic number

So in the example, "love" *agapē* [T626, Z627], the first number is the one to use with Greek tools keyed to the Tyndale-Strong's system, and the second applies to tools that use the Zondervan system.

1. Generally, one may simply use the original four-digit Strong's number to identify words in tools using Strong's system. If a Tyndale-Strong's number is followed by a capital letter (e.g., T61692A), it generally indicates an added subdivision of meaning for the given term. Whenever a Tyndale-Strong's number has a number following a decimal point (e.g., T62013.1), it reflects an instance where new research has yielded a separate, new classification of use for a biblical word. Forthcoming tools from Tyndale House Publishers will include these entries, which were not part of the original Strong's system.



Romans

ROGER MOHRLANG

INTRODUCTION TO *Romans*

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE ROMANS is one of the most significant writings ever to come from the hand of a Christian. Theologically, it is certainly the most important of all of Paul's letters, and many would say it is the single most important document in the entire New Testament—indeed, “arguably the single most important work of Christian theology ever written” (Dunn 1993:838). It is the most fully developed theological statement we have from the earliest Christians. Of all the New Testament writings, it is Romans that gives us the most comprehensive exposition and analysis of the Christian gospel, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Because of this, Romans has been extremely influential in the history of the Christian church and, indeed, in the history of the western world. It was instrumental in the formulation of the early Christian creeds, and it shaped the lives and thinking of such key figures as Augustine (reflected in his understanding of human sinfulness and of grace), Luther (justification by faith), Calvin (God's sovereignty and predestination), Wesley (the transforming work of the Holy Spirit), and Barth (God's sovereign revelation of grace). It played a key role in the rise of the Protestant Reformation and, more than any other single work, has shaped the theology of the modern-day evangelical movement (reflected, for example, in the preaching of Billy Graham and in Campus Crusade for Christ's “Four Spiritual Laws”). Luther thought the book to be so important that “every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, [and] occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much,” he wrote, “and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes” (Luther 1954:xi).

Without question, of all the letters of Paul, Romans is the weightiest and most significant theologically and comes closest to being a carefully constructed theological exposition. Here, in well-organized form, Paul gives us all the central elements of his understanding of the Christian faith: God's saving work in Christ, the doctrine of justification by faith, the claims of Christ as Lord, the life-transforming work of the Holy Spirit, the confident expectation of sharing in God's glory, and much more. Here we have the quintessence of Paul's theological thought. A good grasp of Romans is crucial, then, if we are to understand Paul.

But understanding Romans is no easy task; it is difficult to know how to put all the pieces together. (The title of John A. T. Robinson's book, *Wrestling with Romans*, is apropos.) Of all Paul's writings, this one, more than any other, has challenged—

and continues to challenge—the intellectual powers of interpreters. The seeming inconsistencies and enigmatic logic give rise to many questions and make Romans the most perplexing of Paul's letters. There may well be more written about Romans than about any other book of the New Testament. (For an extensive list of commentaries up to 1973, see Cranfield 1980:xiii-xviii.) But the book of Romans is well worth the struggle.

Here, then, is the greatest of all Paul's letters, a letter that many Christians believe is the single most important writing in the entire New Testament—indeed, perhaps the most significant Christian document in the whole of human history. Here God in his mercy has given us a window into the single most important thing in life, our salvation, with all of its life-changing ramifications. A good grasp of Romans is essential not only for our understanding of Paul but for our understanding of the early Christians' perception of Jesus and his significance, and of the message that lies at the very heart of the New Testament.

AUTHOR

There is no question that Paul is the author of the Letter to the Romans. Though doubts are frequently raised about the authenticity of several of the other writings bearing Paul's name (esp. 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus—but also Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians), there is almost universal acknowledgment among scholars that Paul is the author of Romans.¹ The letter is included in every early list of Paul's letters, and its language, style, and theology are all characteristically Pauline.

Though Paul is the author, it is clear that he was not the actual writer *per se*, inasmuch as Tertius is named as the writer of the epistle (16:22). In keeping with common practice in the Roman world, Paul used the services of Tertius as a secretary (or amanuensis) to write the letter for him. How much of this letter, then, actually came from Paul? Did Paul dictate the letter word by word? Or did Tertius take down Paul's thoughts in a form of shorthand and then later write them out in his own words? Or did Paul simply give Tertius a sketch of what he wanted to say, allowing him a free hand in composing a letter that expressed those ideas? In other words, how much freedom did the secretary have in the actual writing?²

It is impossible to know exactly what Paul communicated to Tertius. But given (1) the importance of the subject matter—the eternal Good News, (2) the careful and extensive way the complex case is argued, (3) the seriousness with which Paul took his apostolic calling and his readers' response to it, and (4) his concern that he not be misinterpreted, it seems likely that Paul would have had a strong interest in making sure that the final wording expressed his thoughts accurately. So, however he used his secretary, we may be reasonably confident that the letter as it stands is an accurate expression of Paul's thought and that he would have been careful to ensure that. With respect to Paul's direct involvement in the whole writing process, Cranfield observes, "In view of the inherent improbability that someone capable of the highly original, closely articulated and also extremely difficult thought which has gone into the Epistle to the Romans would ever have voluntarily entrusted the

expression of it to another person, we conclude that Tertius either wrote the epistle in longhand directly from Paul's dictation or else took it down first in shorthand, and that we may be confident that we have in the text which Tertius wrote the thought of Paul for all intents and purposes expressed as Paul himself expressed it" (1980:2-5).

There is some question as to whether Paul wrote the final invocation of grace (16:20, 24), the final doxology (16:25-27), and the final long list of greetings (16:3-23); see "Canonicity and Textual History" below.

DATE AND OCCASION OF WRITING

The Letter to the Romans was written near the end of Paul's third major mission trip (described in Acts 18:23–20:38), when he was about to set off for Jerusalem with money he had been collecting for the poverty-stricken Christians in Judea (15:25-26). (It is possible that he thought this gift would help to allay Jewish suspicions about him and his work among Gentiles and serve to bring the two branches of the church closer together [Käsemann 1980:403ff; Dunn 1988a:xliv]). The letter seems to have been written during the three months Paul spent in southern Greece (the Roman province of Achaia) before leaving for Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-3). Most probably it was written from Corinth, the capital and home of the key church of the province. Hints of this are found in the references to Phoebe of Cenchrea, Corinth's eastern port (16:1), and to Gaius and Erastus, who may have lived in Corinth (16:23; cf. Acts 19:22; 1 Cor 1:14; 2 Tim 4:20). Thus, the letter was most probably written during the winter or early spring of AD 55–56 or 56–57 (Cranfield 1980:12-16; Dunn 1988a:xliv).

After a decade of productive evangelism and church planting in the Aegean area (in the major towns of the Roman provinces of Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia especially), Paul felt his missionary work in the northeastern end of the Mediterranean was over, at least for a time. Following his trip to Jerusalem he intended to head west—all the way to Spain, the oldest Roman province in the West, which, at that time, was beginning to produce some of the great men of the Roman Empire (Seneca, Trajan, and Hadrian all had Spanish ancestry). On the way, he hoped to stop for a time in Rome—a visit he had long anticipated—to see the Christians and do evangelistic work there before being assisted by them on his way to the western end of the Mediterranean (1:13-15; 15:23-29). This letter, sent on ahead, served to notify the Christians in Rome of his plans.

Why did Paul choose this particular occasion to spell out in such detail his understanding of the Good News and its relevance to both Jews and Gentiles? Were there tensions in the church between the two groups, or conflicting understandings of salvation or the role of the Jewish law? Or was Paul attempting to head off such problems before they erupted? (By this time he was certainly aware of the strength of Jewish-Christian sentiment against his seemingly law-free gospel, but how much this sentiment had surfaced in the church in Rome is not clear.) Was there confusion over the role of Jews and Gentiles in God's overall plan? Was there opposition

to Paul himself? In other words, was Paul addressing specific problems in the Roman church, or was he simply hoping to lay a solid theological foundation for an important young and growing church whose establishment and development he had not personally overseen?

The answers are not entirely clear, and scholarly opinions vary widely. In reality, Paul may well have been concerned with a number of issues such as tensions or disagreements in the church, potential or real opposition to himself and his message, the need to lay a foundation for his evangelistic work, and the role of Rome in his future missionary work in the western Mediterranean (Cranfield 1981:814-823; Fitzmyer 1993:68-80; Dunn 1988a:lv-lviii; cf. Moo 1996:20-21).³ Nonetheless, his primary concern was clearly to expound in some depth, against the background of the Jewish law, the Good News itself—and to show its broader implications for *both* Jews and Gentiles. (Note his repeated emphasis that the Good News is for *everyone* who believes: 1:16; 3:29-30; 4:9-17; 9:24-26; 10:11-13; 11:11-32; 15:7-12.) This is what dominates his thought in Romans. The other issues—for example, the matter of the relationship between the two groups, which some take to be the central concern of the letter (so Kaylor 1988:18ff)—are clearly secondary. Such issues may well have helped to shape what Paul wrote and emphasized (cf. chs 9–11, 14–15), but they are not the primary issues he deals with in this letter. Although it is popular today to emphasize the importance of understanding the letter in light of the specific problems facing the church or the author (cf. Dunn 1988a:lvii; Wedderburn 1988:140-142; Moo 1996:16-22), a careful reading of the letter makes it clear that the dominant focus is not on the problems of the church or the author per se but on the all-absorbing content of the Good News itself (so Cranfield 1981:818-819; Moo 1996:21-22; cf. Mounce 1981:8: “Romans is a magnificent presentation of the gospel”). The local problems may lie in the background, but it is the Good News that dominates the foreground. It is the inner logic of his argument itself, not the sociological setting of the letter, which provides the primary key to understanding Romans.

In any case, for those who didn't know the man well, this letter, written at the end of a major period in Paul's missionary career, served the very practical function of providing a useful introduction to Paul and the Good News he preached prior to his anticipated visit to Rome. At the same time, it laid a solid theological foundation for what was to become a key church in the Empire, a church that Paul hoped would actively support his missionary work in the West.

When Paul finally arrived in Rome three years later, it was not at all as he had planned. According to Luke's account in Acts, his trip to Jerusalem resulted in such a violent uproar in the Jewish community that he was arrested and then imprisoned for two years in Caesarea. Subsequently, when at his request he was sent under guard to Rome to have his case tried by an imperial court,⁴ he spent two more years under house arrest in the capital city while awaiting trial. During this time he was allowed to evangelize and minister freely to all who visited him (Acts 28:16-31). After that, details are less certain. A letter written about AD 96 by Clement, an elder in the church in Rome, suggests that Paul got his wish to preach

the Good News in the western end of the Mediterranean. (Clement speaks of Paul reaching “the furthest limits of the West,” commonly understood as a reference to Spain; *1 Clement* 5; cf. Radice 1968:25). This indicates that the case against him in the Roman courts came to nothing. A few years later (AD 64–65, in the reign of Nero), according to early tradition, Paul was rearrested, sentenced to death in Rome as a leader of the Christians, and beheaded outside the city. (For a full account of the various early traditions about the end of Paul’s life, see Bruce 1977:441-455; cf. Hennecke 1965:2.73.) Shortly before his death, in full anticipation of the glorious future awaiting him, he wrote,

As for me, my life has already been poured out as an offering to God. The time of my death is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, and I have remained faithful. And now the prize awaits me—the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me on the day of his return. (2 Tim 4:6-8)

AUDIENCE

No one knows precisely when the church in Rome first came into being or what its exact makeup was. Ever since 62 BC, when Pompey returned from Judea with many captives, there had been a large community of Jews in Rome. By the time of Paul, it may have numbered 40,000–50,000 and many synagogues had sprung up. (The Jewish catacombs list 10–13 synagogues that may have been in existence in Paul’s time; Dunn 1988a:xlvi.) Most likely the Good News was first spread in these synagogues—by ordinary Jewish Christians returning from Jerusalem rather than by evangelists who had targeted the city. There is no evidence for the tradition that Peter was the founder and first bishop of the church in Rome, though it is clear that he later preached in Rome and that he was eventually executed for his witness there (Eusebius 1965:88, 104-105). That there was a Christian community in Rome for at least seven years before Paul wrote this letter seems certain from Suetonius’s reference to Claudius’s mass expulsion of Jews from Rome in AD 49 because of riots caused (in the synagogues presumably) by a certain Chrestus—a name commonly taken as a reference to Christ (cf. Dunn 1988a:xliv-liv).

Judging by the number of Jews Paul mentions in the last chapter of Romans (which I assume to be part of the original writing) and by the priority he gives to addressing issues relevant to Jews, it appears that the decree was later relaxed and that many Jews had returned to Rome and were then part of the church. It is also clear that a number of Gentiles were in the church (cf. 1:5-6, 13; 11:13-32; 15:7-12, 15-16). Most of them were probably originally connected with the synagogues, given Paul’s frequent reference to the Scriptures. But whether the church was dominantly Jewish or Gentile at the time of Paul’s writing is difficult to tell (Cranfield 1980:21). In the fourth century, Ambrosiaster says the Romans “had embraced the faith of Christ, albeit according to the Jewish rite” (cited by Bruce 1985:15-16). The names listed in chapter 16 reflect a mix of Jewish, Greek, and Roman backgrounds

OUTLINE

- I. The Good News of Salvation (1:1–8:39)
 - A. Introduction (1:1–17)
 - 1. Greetings (1:1–7)
 - 2. Paul's desire to visit Rome (1:8–15)
 - 3. The Good News that saves (1:16–17)
 - B. The Universal Need of Salvation (1:18–3:20)
 - 1. The world has become corrupt (1:18–32)
 - 2. God will judge all sinners (2:1–16)
 - 3. Jews are sinners, too (2:17–3:8)
 - 4. All people are sinners (3:9–20)
 - C. God's Gift of Salvation (3:21–5:21)
 - 1. God's way of saving us (3:21–31)
 - 2. Abraham as an example of saving faith (4:1–25)
 - 3. The results of saving faith (5:1–11)
 - 4. Adam and Christ contrasted (5:12–21)
 - D. Objections to the Good News (6:1–7:25)
 - 1. Why not continue in sin? (6:1–23)
 - a. We have "died" to sin (6:1–14)
 - b. We have become slaves of righteousness (6:15–23)
 - 2. What about the law? (7:1–25)
 - a. We are no longer bound by the law (7:1–6)
 - b. God's law reveals our sin (7:7–13)
 - c. The power of sin in our lives (7:14–25)
 - E. The Power and Glory of the New Life (8:1–39)
 - 1. Living by the power of God's Spirit (8:1–17)
 - 2. The glorious future (8:18–30)
 - 3. God's never-ending love (8:31–39)
- II. God's Plan for the Jews and Gentiles (9:1–11:36)
 - A. God Chooses Whomever He Wishes (9:1–29)
 - B. Jews Have Refused God's Salvation (9:30–10:4)
 - C. Whoever Believes Will Be Saved (10:5–13)
 - D. Jews Have No Excuse for Refusing the Message (10:14–21)
 - E. A Few Jews Have Been Saved (11:1–10)
 - F. Salvation Has Now Come to Gentiles (11:11–24)
 - G. All Israel Will Be Saved One Day (11:25–32)
 - H. The Mysterious Ways of God (11:33–36)
- III. Living the Good News (12:1–15:13)
 - A. A Fully Dedicated Life (12:1–21)
 - B. Respect for Authority (13:1–7)
 - C. The Importance of Love (13:8–10)

- D. Being Ready for Christ's Return (13:11-14)
 - E. Respecting the Opinions of Others (14:1-23)
 - F. Living Together in Love and Harmony (15:1-13)
- IV. Conclusion (15:14-16:27)
- A. Paul's Missionary Calling (15:14-22)
 - B. Paul's Travel Plans (15:23-33)
 - C. Personal Greetings and Final Instructions (16:1-24)
 - D. Paul's Closing Words (16:25-27)

ENDNOTES

1. For a more skeptical view of the Pauline authorship of certain passages, see O'Neill 1975:11-22.
2. Conceding even a minimum of secretarial initiative and responsibility in drafting the letters—and the use of different secretaries—is one way of accounting for the differences in style and vocabulary that we find in Paul's various letters (cf. Kelly 1963:27).
3. For further discussion of Paul's purposes in writing, see Minear 1971; Wedderburn 1988; Donfried 1991.
4. For Paul and the Roman legal system, see Sherwin-White 1963:57-70, 108-119.

COMMENTARY ON

Romans

◆ I. The Good News of Salvation (1:1–8:39)

A. Introduction (1:1–17)

1. Greetings (1:1–7)

This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News. ²God promised this Good News long ago through his prophets in the holy Scriptures. ³The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, ⁴and he was shown to be* the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit.* He is Jesus Christ our Lord. ⁵Through Christ, God has given us the

privilege* and authority as apostles to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will believe and obey him, bringing glory to his name.

⁶And you are included among those Gentiles who have been called to belong to Jesus Christ. ⁷I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be his own holy people.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

1:4a Or and was designated. 1:4b Or by the Spirit of holiness; or in the new realm of the Spirit.
1:5 Or the grace.

NOTES

1:1 *This letter is from Paul.* Paul always refers to himself as *Paulos* [T⁶3972, Z⁶4263], the Gr. form of his Roman name *Paulus*. Saul was his Jewish name, used only in Acts (cf. Acts 13:9).

a slave of Christ Jesus. This implies that Paul was wholly claimed by Christ and utterly devoted to his service, as one who belonged entirely to him. The phrase may have positive connotations: in the OT, "slave of the Lord" (or its equivalent) was a title of honor for people who served God, such as Abraham, Moses (e.g., Deut 34:5), Joshua (e.g., Josh 24:29), David, the prophets, and the psalmists (Cranfield 1980:50); similarly, in some languages of the Middle East, the title "slave of the king" was used of important officials (L&N 1.741). For background on slavery in the Greco-Roman world, see Rupprecht 1993:881. Instead of "Christ Jesus," some Gr. mss (P²⁶ & A) have "Jesus Christ."

chosen. Lit., "called" (*klētos* [T⁶2822, Z⁶3105]). Not in the weaker sense of "invited" ("Many are called, but few are chosen," Matt 22:14), but in the stronger sense of being especially designated or appointed, either by God or by Jesus himself. The calling came at the time of Paul's conversion (Acts 26:12-18; Gal 1:1). Cf. 1:6-7; 8:28-30; 9:12, 24; 11:29; 2 Thess 2:14; comments on 8:28-30.

apostle. One especially commissioned by the Lord to proclaim his word. Though it often refers specifically to the Twelve (esp. in Luke-Acts), the word may also refer more widely to others (cf. 1 Cor 15:5, 7, 9).

sent out to preach his Good News. Lit., “set apart for the Good News of God”—i.e., set apart for the service or proclamation of the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ, which Paul spells out in chs 1-8.

1:2 through his prophets. This may refer generally to the inspired men of the OT (including Moses and David, who were called prophets, Acts 2:29-31; 3:21-24), not simply those associated with the section we know as “the prophets.”

1:3 In his earthly life. Or, “From a human point of view”; or, “On the human level”; or, “As a human.” Lit., “According to the flesh” (*kata sarka* [T^G2596/4561, Z^G2848/4922]). The phrase stands in contrast to the parallel phrase “according to the spirit of holiness” (*kata pneuma hagiōsunēs* [T^G4151/42, Z^G4460/43]) in 1:4 (cf. note). Verses 3-4 may come from an early confession of faith (Cranfield 1980:57-58; Moo 1996:45-46).

he was born into King David’s family line. Lit., “who came from the seed of David.” The fact that Paul uses the verb “came” (*genomenou* [T^G1096, Z^G1181]) instead of the more common “was born” (*gennēthentos* [T^G1080, Z^G1164]) may imply that he was familiar with the tradition of Jesus’ unusual birth (Moo 1996:46). There was a widespread expectation among Jews that the Messiah would come from the family line of David (Isa 11:1-11; Jer 23:5-6; 33:14-16; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25). Jesus’ Davidic descent rests on Joseph’s acceptance and legitimization of Jesus as his son, even though Joseph was not his natural father (Cranfield 1980:58-59).

1:4 and he was shown to be the Son of God. Or, “and he was designated the Son of God”; cf. *orizō* [T^G3724, Z^G3988].

by the power of the Holy Spirit. Or, “from the viewpoint of the Holy Spirit”; or, “from the viewpoint of his divine holiness.” Lit., “with power according to the spirit of holiness.” The phrase “with power” (*en dunamei* [T^G1411, Z^G1539]) may be understood as modifying either “shown” or “Son of God.” The phrase “according to the spirit of holiness” (*kata pneuma hagiōsunēs* [T^G42, Z^G43]) is a reference either to the Holy Spirit (Bruce 1985:69; Dunn 1988a:14-15) or to Christ’s own inner spirit (Mounce 1995:62). Note the contrast in 1:3-4: “on the human level, . . . but on the level of the spirit—the Holy Spirit” (REB); “as to his humanity, . . . as to his divine holiness” (TEV). Stott (1994:50-51) understands it rather as a contrast between Jesus’ pre-Resurrection and post-Resurrection ministries, “the first frail and the second powerful through the outpoured Spirit.” For a discussion of the complexities of this verse, see Cranfield 1980:61-64. The NLT rendering is accurate.

1:5 God has given us. The word “us” refers either to Paul and the other apostles or to Paul himself (as in REB, TEV, CEV).

the privilege and authority as apostles. Or, (preferably) “the grace [divine gift] of apostleship.” Lit., “grace and apostleship” (cf. 15:15-16)—not two separate things; the divine gift of being an apostle (Moo 1996:51).

Gentiles. A Jewish term for people who are not Jews. Though *ethnesin* [T^G1484, Z^G1620] may be translated “the nations” or “the pagans,” the word is better translated “Gentiles” in most of its occurrences in Romans. This verse and those immediately following may imply that the letter is addressed primarily to Gentiles (cf. 11:13-14; 15:15-16) or that the church in Rome is predominantly Gentile. See, however, “Audience” in the Introduction.

so that they will believe and obey him. Lit., “for the obedience of faith” (*eis hupakoēn pisteōs* [T^G4102, Z^G4411]), a phrase that could mean either “obedience that results from faith” (cf. “obedience inspired by faith”; Williams 1952:328) or, more probably (in the context of chs 1-8), “obedience that consists of faith” (Cranfield 1980:66 n.3; cf. 10:16; 11:30-31; 15:18; 16:19—all of which speak of people’s response to the Good News as an expression of their obedience to God; cf. 16:26; Schlatter 1995:11). The NLT leaves the relationship between the two terms ambiguous (so also REB, TEV).

bringing glory to his name. Lit., “for the sake of his name,” i.e., for the sake of glorifying either Christ or God.

1:6 called to belong to Jesus Christ. Or, “called by Jesus Christ” (*klētoi Iēsou Christou*). The word “called” (*klētoi* [T^G2822A, Z^G3105]) implies “chosen, selected”; cf. note on 1:1; cf. 8:28, 30; 9:12, 24; 11:29.

1:7 I am writing to all of you in Rome who are loved by God. The words “in Rome” are omitted in a few ancient authorities (G 1739^{ms} Origen). Instead, these manuscripts read, “to all those in the love of God.” G also omits “in Rome” in 1:15. This raises questions about the destination of the original letter and its later recensions (see “Canonicity and Textual History” in the Introduction).

called to be his own holy people. Lit., “called to be saints,” i.e., chosen to be God’s holy people—those set apart for him. For the meaning of “called,” see note on 1:1.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. A common invocation often found at the beginning of Paul’s letters, which may represent a combining and Christianizing of the traditional Greek greeting (*chairein* [T^G5463, Z^G5897G]) with the traditional Jewish greeting (*shalom* [T^H7965, Z^H8934], “peace”). “Grace” (*charis* [T^G5485, Z^G5921]), the keynote of the Good News, refers to God’s blessing, love, and kindness, always undeserved. “Peace” (*eirēnē* [T^G1515, Z^G1645]), when used generally as here, probably refers to a state of well being and contentedness embracing the whole of one’s life, deriving from the Good News (see comments on 15:13). In some of Paul’s invocations, the word “mercy” (*eleos* [T^G1656, Z^G1799]) is added (1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; cf. Gal 6:16), just as the combination “mercy and peace” is found in some earlier Jewish invocations (Dunn 1988a:20; Käsemann 1980:16).

COMMENTARY

The beginning section of Romans (1:1-17) serves as a general introduction and is best divided into three paragraphs. In these paragraphs, Paul introduces himself and greets the church (1:1-7), speaks of his desire to come see them in the near future (1:8-15), and states the main theme of the letter (1:16-17).

Paul introduces himself as a missionary apostle called by God to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, the resurrected Son of God and Lord of the universe, so that people all over the world will come to believe and obey him. Paul then invoked God’s blessing and peace upon those in Rome who belong to Jesus. This unusually long beginning paragraph (1:1-7), a single complex sentence in Greek, represents a Christian expansion of the typical way of beginning ancient Greek letters. Most letters from this period begin by simply listing the names of the sender and recipient and giving a brief greeting: “Person A to Person B, greetings” (Bruce 1985:67).

Paul’s Missionary Calling. The beginning of the letter focuses immediately on the main point—the Good News of Jesus Christ, the most important message in the world. What Paul said about himself is entirely subservient to this: He was a missionary apostle specifically chosen by God to preach the Good News, one who was wholly claimed by Christ to serve his cause (1:1, 5; 15:15-16). He knew that Christ had been revealed to him in order that he might make him known to the world (Gal 1:16). In a most unusual way, recounted three times in Acts, he seems to have sensed his missionary calling from the earliest days of his conversion (Acts 9:3-6, 15-16; 22:14-15; 26:16-18). So he wrote as one who was passionately convinced

that he had been given a crucial role to play in the most important work in the world, the proclamation of the Good News of salvation.

He clearly understood that it was God himself who had commissioned him for this work (1:1). Writing to the Galatians, he speaks of having been appointed directly by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father (Gal 1:1; cf. the words of the risen Lord, "Saul is my chosen instrument to take my message to the Gentiles," Acts 9:15). Indeed, he was convinced that God ordained him for this work long before he was ever born (Gal 1:15). F. F. Bruce (1985:67) concludes, "All the rich and diversified gifts of Paul's heritage (Jewish, Greek, and Roman), together with his upbringing, were fore-ordained by God with a view to his apostolic service."

Though we can see a number of ways in which Paul's heritage and upbringing served him well in his missionary work, it is not clear how much Paul thought of these as "fore-ordained by God with a view to his apostolic service"—or, for that matter, how much he thinks of any Christian's background as fore-ordained by God with a view to his or her special calling in the service of Christ. True, Paul acknowledges that God "chose us in advance, and he makes everything work out according to his plan" (Eph 1:11). But generally speaking, his foreordination language is limited to the idea of God choosing his people for salvation (8:29; 11:2, 5; Eph 1:4-5, 11; 2:4-6, 8-10; Col 3:12; 1 Thess 1:4; 5:9; 2 Thess 2:13). His understanding of an individual's ministry seems to be shaped more by the notion of charismatic giftedness than by considerations of natural heritage (12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:4-11, 28; Eph 4:11). Nonetheless, because here and there in the Old Testament clear traces of God's providential hand can be seen in the background of the people he chooses to use (as in the cases of Joseph, Moses, Samuel, Ezra, Esther, and Daniel, for instance), it is not unreasonable to assume that such notions may be in Paul's thought, as well. Nor is it unreasonable for us to look for traces of God's providential goodness in our own individual backgrounds, preparing us for our own specific callings in the service of Christ.

As a "slave" of Christ (1:1), he knows that his life is no longer his own—no longer to be lived for himself but for his master (Phil 1:21). He has been "bought . . . with a high price" (1 Cor 6:20), and every part of his life now belongs to Christ and must be devoted to his work in the world. Nothing else is ultimately important. As a slave of Christ, Paul viewed himself as a slave of Christ's people also (2 Cor 4:5). Furthermore, in his missionary evangelism, he regarded himself as a slave of all those to whom he preached (1 Cor 9:19-22)—in the sense that his whole life was devoted to the spiritual welfare of others.

And so it is for every Christian, in Paul's thinking: as redeemed people, our self-identity is defined by our conversion to Christ. Loyalty to Christ transcends the importance of everything else in our lives. Like Paul, all of us who confess Christ as Lord are to consider ourselves "slaves" of Christ; we too are claimed by Christ—"bought with a high price"—to serve his cause. Though not all of us are called to a life of pioneer evangelism as Paul was, all of us are called to be witnesses for Christ in everything we say and do and to be devoted ministers of God's grace to the body

of Christ. Like Paul, every serious follower of Christ must say, "For to me, living means living for Christ" (Phil 1:21). Because Christ died for us, we recognize that we, too, are called to live no longer for ourselves but for him (2 Cor 5:14-15). And if we take seriously our "slavery" to Christ—if we really mean what we say when we confess Christ as our Lord—then every part of our life must be devoted to his service because we belong to him. The whole of our life must be considered his, not ours. Slaves do not have the privilege of living for themselves like everyone else.

Here Paul's words reflect a strong and radical understanding of Christian discipleship that challenges the softer, more comfortable view of the Christian life so common in the modern world. Paul knows that we only "find" our life by "losing" it, that dying is the necessary prelude to living. As slaves of Christ, we must constantly die to ourselves in order to live for the one who has claimed us, body and soul. This kind of commitment will never be easy to live out, but it is the life to which all true disciples know themselves to be called.

Christ as the Fulfillment of the Scriptures. In the second verse of this introduction, we discover that the amazing Good News that Paul was called to preach was predicted—indeed, promised—in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves (1:2). This was a key element in the early Christian apologetic. This messianic way of reading the Old Testament is reflected throughout Paul's writings (1:17; 3:21; 4:3-25; 10:5-20; 15:8-12, 21). As he testifies to King Agrippa, "I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to Jews and Gentiles alike" (Acts 26:22-23). Though it is primarily the servant texts of Isaiah that Paul seems to have been thinking of here (Isa 42:6; 49:1, 5-6; 52:13-53:12), he clearly understood the Old Testament as a whole to point to Christ and the Good News, and read it in that light—as did the entire early Christian community. After all, didn't Jesus himself say, "The Scriptures point to me!" (John 5:39)? Luke especially, one of Paul's converts and long-term missionary associates, highlighted Jesus' endorsement of this perspective:

Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. . . . Then he said, ". . . everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled. . . . Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day."
(Luke 24:27, 44, 46)

From a Christian point of view, then, the Old Testament must always be read, interpreted (judiciously), and taught in light of its fulfillment in Christ and the New Testament. Christians do not read the Old Testament in isolation or merely as the Hebrew Scriptures but as part of a larger canonical whole.

In the New Testament, the coming of Jesus Christ as the Messiah is viewed as the fulfillment of all the deepest hopes and dreams of the Jewish people and the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises under the old covenant (cf. esp. Heb 8:1-10:18). Paul went even further when he spoke of Jesus as the fulfillment of the

deepest hopes and dreams of human beings universally: he is the ultimate reality, to which all other religious aspirations and teachings point, and of which they were but “shadows” (Col 2:17).

Jesus Christ is from the family line of David—a “Son of David” (a requirement for the Messiah, from a Jewish point of view)—yet at the same time he is the Son of God, sharing the nature of God himself, as the miracle of the Resurrection attests (1:3-4). This dual emphasis on Jesus as both human and divine anticipates the creeds of the early church, in which the early Christians struggled to put into words their understanding of who Jesus is and how he relates to God. Among the New Testament writers, it is the writer of Hebrews who places the greatest emphasis on the humanness of Jesus (considered essential for his work of atonement and intercession; Heb 2:10, 14-18; 5:8). And it is John, Paul, and the writer of Revelation who place the greatest emphasis on his deity (John 1:1-4, 18; 20:28; Col 1:15-19; 2:9; Rev 5:6-14). (There are three places where Paul seems to speak of Jesus as “God”: 9:5; 2 Thess 1:12; Titus 2:13; cf. Rom 1:7.) Though the early Christians thought it was essential to have a genuine appreciation of both the human and divine aspects of Jesus (he is always to be understood as simultaneously “fully human and fully divine”), the overall emphasis in this passage is on his divine power and authority as the Son of God, shown above all in the Resurrection.

The Resurrection was a historical event; it shows that God was clearly at work in Jesus’ life (1:4) and confirms that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God—the Lord and ultimate Judge of every human being. The historical fact of the Resurrection, then, played a central role in the proclamation of the Good News by the early Christians (Acts 2:31-33; 3:15; 5:30-32; 10:40-41; 13:30-31; 17:3, 31-32; 23:6; 24:21; 25:19; 26:6-8, 22-23; 1 Cor 15:1-8). It must also be a central element in the proclamation of the historic faith today, when skepticism abounds. Unlike other religions, the Christian faith is founded on a crucial historical event, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and all else flows from that.

The historicity of the Resurrection also plays a vital role in our understanding of the Good News, focused as it is on the promise of life beyond death. The resurrection of Christ assures us not only that there is life beyond death but also that we who belong to him will one day fully share in that resurrection life (1 Cor 15:20). To deny the historicity of the Resurrection, then, is to deny the heart of the Good News itself, leaving us with no sure hope of anything beyond this life (1 Cor 15:12-19).

The Resurrection plays another role in Paul’s thinking: it opens the door for believers to begin to experience the age to come. As a result of the Resurrection, believers can experience, here and now, something of the life and power of the Kingdom of God—“resurrection life”—by the power of the Holy Spirit (6:4-11; 7:4-6; 8:2-4, 9-14). This is nothing less than the power of the resurrected Christ himself at work in his people (Gal 2:20; Col 1:27). One of Paul’s deepest desires is to experience the full extent of this power in his own life—to “know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead” (Phil 3:10). In the same way, he prays that the Ephesians will come to know the incredible greatness of

this power at work in their own lives—"the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead" (Eph 1:19-20). So the resurrection of Christ not only confirms the truth of Jesus, the Good News, and the Christian hope, it also makes it possible for us to experience the living Christ and his power in our lives today.

Paul's way of thinking about the Christian life was radically shaped by his awareness that the Spirit of the resurrected Christ lives in those who belong to him. It is the Spirit of the living Christ within—not simply our own efforts—that produces in us Christlike qualities and character (Gal 5:22-23). Further, because our body is a sanctuary, we must do nothing that would offend the living presence of Christ within (1 Cor 6:18-19; Eph 4:30; 1 Thess 4:8). The awareness of Christ's presence in believers also influences Paul's way of thinking about Christian ministry, for here, too, the real power and effectiveness lie with Christ (the Spirit of Christ) and not with us (1 Cor 2:4-5, 13; 2 Cor 4:7, 10-11; 12:8-10). So in both Christian living and Christian ministry, the real power lies with the living Christ within; believers are simply channels through which the power of the resurrected Christ flows. The awareness of Christ's presence working in and through us assures us that we will one day share in his full glory (Col 1:27).

Believing and Obeying. Paul then tells his readers that he was given his apostleship in order to proclaim the Good News so that people would "believe and obey" (1:5; 16:26). Though the exact relationship between believing and obeying is ambiguous in the text, Paul probably means "obey by believing" in this context (cf. note on 1:5). Elsewhere he makes it clear that it is our faith in Christ, not our works, that saves us (1:16-17; 3:22-26; 4:3-8; 5:1; 9:30-32; 10:9-10; Gal 2:16; 3:2, 6, 11, 26). Salvation is always to be understood as a gift of God's grace that we receive solely by faith, not as a reward for our efforts (Eph 2:8-9). At the same time, however, true faith will always be expressed in obedience, for true faith can never be divorced from a serious attempt to live it out. That is why Paul speaks of "faith expressing itself in love" (Gal 5:6). So, although we are saved by faith, we are paradoxically judged by works. This is a point made throughout the New Testament—by Jesus (Matt 7:21-27; John 5:29), Paul (2 Cor 5:10), John (1 John 1:5-6; 2:4-6; 3:4-10), and especially James (Jas 2:14-26). Though our works can never save us, the lack of them can damn us—by putting the lie to our claim to believe—if we are not serious about living out our faith. So although we are saved by faith alone, true saving faith is never alone. Authentic faith is always life-changing faith that is reflected in our works, i.e., in how we live (Eph 2:10). That is the point emphasized in the seemingly contradictory passage, James 2:14-26, which ends with the statement "Faith is dead without good works"—a statement with which Paul would agree. (For the relation between faith and works, see the comments on 4:1-8; 6:15-23; 8:5-14; see also "Salvation by Faith and Judgment by Works" in the Introduction.)

The Roman Christians were among those who had obeyed the Good News. As such, they were those whom God himself had "called" (or chosen) to belong to Jesus Christ. They are called to be "saints," God's own holy people, those whom God has specially chosen and set apart for himself. They are the ones specially loved

by God (1:6-7). So even saving faith must be understood ultimately as a gift of God, the result of God's sovereign work in the hearts of those he has mercifully selected to become part of his family. Behind all true faith in the living Christ, then, lies the gracious work of God, calling people to himself and making such faith possible (Eph 2:8-10; cf. Matt 11:25-27; John 6:44; 15:16). That is why, in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, God's people are spoken of as the "elect," those who by God's mercy are chosen and predestined to belong to him. (For election and predestination, see the comments on 9:6-29; see also "Predestination and Human Responsibility" in the Introduction.)

With a privileged calling come great responsibility and a sense of infinite indebtedness. Those who by the grace of God are rescued from his anger and judgment and chosen to be his people should dedicate their lives to him and live the rest of their days in joyful, grateful devotion to his service (12:1-2). As his people, they are to be holy, just as he is holy (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 1 Pet 1:15-16). Everything Paul writes about the Christian life presupposes a sense of total indebtedness to God, who in sheer mercy grants believers their salvation.

◆ 2. Paul's desire to visit Rome (1:8-15)

⁸Let me say first that I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith in him is being talked about all over the world. ⁹God knows how often I pray for you. Day and night I bring you and your needs in prayer to God, whom I serve with all my heart* by spreading the Good News about his Son.

¹⁰One of the things I always pray for is the opportunity, God willing, to come at last to see you. ¹¹For I long to visit you so I can bring you some spiritual gift that will help you grow strong in the Lord. ¹²When

we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

¹³I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters,* that I planned many times to visit you, but I was prevented until now. I want to work among you and see spiritual fruit, just as I have seen among other Gentiles.

¹⁴For I have a great sense of obligation to people in both the civilized world and the rest of the world,* to the educated and uneducated alike. ¹⁵So I am eager to come to you in Rome, too, to preach the Good News.

1:9 Or *in my spirit*. 1:13 Greek *brothers*. 1:14 Greek *to Greeks and barbarians*.

NOTES

1:8 *your faith in him*. Though the words "in him" are omitted in the Gr. text, when Paul speaks of "faith" (*pistis* [TG4102, ZG4411]), he usually means faith in Jesus Christ. Saving faith is not an intellectual affirmation of the truth of Christ; rather, it is personal trust in Christ as Savior. See note on 3:22.

all over the world. This does not imply that their faith was extraordinary but rather that news of it had spread far and wide (Cranfield 1980:75), particularly in the places where Christianity had already been established.

1:9 *Day and night*. Lit., "without ceasing."

with all my heart. Lit., "in [or with] my spirit"—i.e., with my whole being. For other interpretations, see Cranfield 1980:76-77.



Galatians

GERALD L. BORCHERT

INTRODUCTION TO *Galatians*

SEVERAL DECADES AGO, I taught New Testament at a college in Jerusalem. During those years, I often visited the Temple Mount and the Western Wall, walking the busy streets and browsing in bookstores. During that time, I had an experience that carried my thoughts back almost two millennia to the time when the Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians. In a certain bookstore, I picked up a book of ancient Jewish prayers, and as I was thumbing through it, a particular prayer caught my attention:

*Blessed art thou, Lord our God, King of the Universe,
Who hast not made me a Gentile.
Who hast not made me a slave.
Who hast not made me a woman.*

A footnote then added what women should pray for the last line:

Who hast made me according to thy will. (Birnbbaum n.d.:15-18)

I had two immediate reactions. One was to feel sorry for women who had to thank God for status as second-class citizens. The other was to realize that the prayer was in the same order as Paul's reversal of discrimination, stated in Galatians 3:28: "There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Leaving that bookstore, I walked to the Western Wall and put on my yarmulke. I went into the place under the arch where the men were praying and the women were not permitted, and I began to ponder these two realizations. Thereafter, I returned to my office and read Galatians again. It seemed like a very different book than the one I had read before. As I read, many memories flooded my mind—memories of classes in which I had studied Galatians but not fully understood why Paul was so vehement in his reaction to the Judaizers, memories of attending a synagogue where the women were only allowed to sit in the balcony while the men welcomed me to sit with them and even asked for my opinion on prospective rabbis that they were interviewing.

Something revolutionary happened to me at that time. Living in Israel, among all the restrictions of the Jews, I discovered liberty in Christ. I experienced an undeniable affinity with Paul, who became one of my foremost teachers.

Since then, Galatians has been one of my favorite books of the Bible, and I can easily understand why Luther named it his "Katerina" after his beloved wife,

Katerina von Bora (Luther 1955–1975:40.2). It is a believer's *Magna Carta* of Christian liberty (Borchert 1994:145). Accordingly, I welcome you to the adventurous study of Paul's first epistle, which argues the centrality of the gospel and its message of faith and freedom in Christ with powerful clarity.

AUTHOR

Although scholars differ on many points in interpreting Galatians, there has been an almost complete consensus that if the Apostle Paul wrote any epistle, he must have written Galatians. Even F. C. Baur (the nineteenth-century founder of the Tübingen Hypothesis, which posited that many of the Pauline epistles were pseudonymous) constructed his thesis about the early church on the basis that Paul must have written Galatians, Romans, and the two Corinthian letters (Baur 1875:1.246).

Paul's authorship does not necessarily mean that Paul actually penned the document, because his pattern was apparently to dictate his ideas to an amanuensis or secretary (cf. Rom 16:22, where Tertius identifies himself as Paul's scribe). This practice was common, as indicated by its occurrence in thousands of documentary Greek papyri (see Longenecker 1974; 1990:lix). An amanuensis could be strictly a penman (like Tertius) or could be given some latitude in suggesting the form or content of the letter.¹

At the end of a letter, the person who was dictating material would usually add a few words in his own handwriting so that the recipient would recognize that the letter was truly from the person who claimed to be writing. Paul also followed this way of authenticating his letters (2 Thess 3:17; cf. also 1 Cor 16:21; Col 4:18; Phlm 1:19). This practice is clearly seen in Galatians: in concluding his letter, Paul stopped dictating, took up the quill himself, and added in his own "large letters" (see commentary at 6:11), a firm authentication of his harsh censure upon the Judaizing false teachers who were leading his Galatian children into error (6:12-13). As a result of this personal addition, none of the Galatian deviants could claim that the stinging words in this epistle had not originated with Paul.

The name of Paul's amanuensis for Galatians is not given. While some of these secretaries were given a degree of freedom to fill out the particulars in customary acknowledgements, orders, letters of condolence, and so on, it is unlikely to have been the case in emotionally packed and tersely formulated documents such as Galatians. The book vibrates with energy and displays amazing rhetorical skill. It must have come from the mind of an incredibly gifted person who was completely conversant in both Jewish and Hellenistic styles of argument. These qualities suggest that Paul had a very direct role in forming the structure and content of the entire letter.

DATE, OCCASION OF WRITING, AND AUDIENCE

While the authorship of Galatians raises few questions, other matters of introduction are not so easily treated, and some of these issues remain extremely controversial. One of the foremost of the debated points involves the timing of Paul's visits to

Jerusalem (cf. 1:17-18; 2:1-2) as they correspond to the journeys of Paul recorded in Acts. Most particularly, scholars debate whether Galatians was written before or after the Jerusalem Council (c. AD 50; Acts 15:1-35). Scholars have also wondered whether the recipients of this epistle were living in northern Galatia or in southern Galatia. The two positions are known, sensibly enough, as the “Northern Galatia Theory” and the “Southern Galatia Theory.”

Until the twentieth century, it was commonly believed that Paul must have made a trip into the mountainous regions of north central Asia Minor where the ethnic Galatians lived (the Northern Galatia Theory). Although such a trip is not recorded in Acts, it was forcefully argued that Paul, under inspiration, would not have misidentified his intended recipients, wrongly referring to Iconians and Phrygians as Galatians. In the decade prior to the twentieth century, however, William Ramsay began his journeys and research into the areas of Paul’s travels, which at that time were little known, at least to Westerners. Although Ramsay began as a disciple of Baur (who questioned the historical accuracy of Acts), Ramsay ultimately concluded that Baur had erred and that Acts was a trustworthy guide to the geography of the area. He found that the term “Galatia” was sometimes used for the residents of the Roman province of Galatia, which included Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe—regions that Paul passed through on his first missionary journey (Acts 14). Accordingly, there was little need to posit an unknown visit to the ethnic Galatians of the north in order to make the name “Galatians” satisfactory for this epistle. Many modern scholars now affirm the Southern Galatia Theory—they consider that Paul wrote to the churches in southern Galatia some time after his first missionary journey, which probably occurred no later than AD 45–47.

The remaining question is when exactly Paul wrote this letter, especially in correlation to the events of Acts 15 (which are dated AD 50). If the Jerusalem Council took place prior to Paul’s letter to the Galatians, Paul certainly would have cited the council’s declarations of liberty for the Gentile believers. Because Paul makes no mention of the council, some scholars believe that Galatians was written prior to AD 50.

Granted this assumption, the next task is to line up Paul’s mention of a visit to Jerusalem (2:1-10) with one of the five Jerusalem visits reported by Luke in the book of Acts. The five Luke records are: (1) after his conversion (Acts 9:26; cf. Acts 21:17-18), (2) to bring relief to the church in Jerusalem from the church in Antioch (Acts 11:27-30), (3) for the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29), (4) when Paul “went up” (the usual designation for going to Jerusalem; Acts 18:22), and (5) at his final visit and arrest (Acts 21:15-30). By contrast, Paul records only three visits—the two mentioned in Galatians (1:18-21; 2:1-5) and the so-called contribution visit (Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4; cf. 2 Cor 1:16), which could be identical with his final visit.² The crucial issue for our purposes is to determine how the early visits recorded in Galatians and the ones in Acts are related.

From my understanding of these texts, the most helpful way to resolve the discrepancies is to order the sequence of events as follows:

1. Jesus was crucified sometime between AD 26–30, inasmuch as his ministry began at about age 30 (Luke 3:23), and Herod the Great, who was alive at the time of Jesus' birth (Matt 2:1), died in 4 BC. Dionysius Exiguus, who established the Christian calendar (c. AD 525), miscalculated the years related to the Roman calendar.
2. Paul was probably converted on the Damascus Road within two or three years after Jesus' death (Acts 9:1-19a).
3. Paul testified about Jesus in Damascus (Acts 9:19b-22) and thereafter went into Arabia for a three-year period before returning to Damascus (Gal 1:16-17).
4. After those three years, Paul went to Jerusalem for a 15-day period (1:18), probably sometime between AD 30 and 33, depending on the death of Jesus. The followers of Jesus there were fearful of him (Acts 9:26), but Barnabas convinced them that Paul's bold witness was authentic. At this time, Paul would have met with Cephas (Peter) and James before being hurried off to Caesarea and Tarsus to avoid confrontation with the Jewish authorities (1:18-20; Acts 9:26-29).
5. Then, Paul spent 11 or 14 years in ministry (depending on whether the three years in Arabia of Gal 1:18 are part of the 14 years counted from his conversion in Gal 2:1 or are prior to the 14 years). This period of ministry possibly lasted until about AD 44. "Syria" and "Cilicia" (1:21) were regional names; the first was the area around Antioch, and the second could have included any place in Western Asia Minor or Tarsus and probably included the locations of the first missionary journey.
6. Thereafter, Paul apparently went to Jerusalem again privately with Barnabas and Titus. Paul claimed that God had revealed that he should make this trip and that it was not forced upon him (2:1-2, 6) by some need for counsel. At that time, circumcision does not seem to have been a burning issue because there was apparently no compelling argument that Titus needed to be circumcised (2:3). That issue, however, did become important later (2:11-16). Luke apparently did not discuss this segment of Paul's life in Acts because he was only highlighting what he saw as the strategic points in Paul's ministry.

With what visit in Acts, then, does the visit mentioned in Galatians 2:1-3 best correlate? Calvin and many other scholars have thought it coincided with the visit of Acts 15 (the Jerusalem Council), but there are problems with this view. First, the visit in Galatians 2:1 was only Paul's second visit (probably c. AD 47), whereas the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29) was his third visit (AD 49–50). Second, Barnabas was clearly regarded as a member of the missionary team in Galatians 2:1, just as he was in the second visit of Acts 11:27-30. He is even mentioned first in this second Acts reference. Paul and Barnabas did not separate until the second journey, when they were to carry the council's decision to Syria and Asia Minor. It was precisely at this time that Silas, who was to report the decision, actually became Paul's partner rather than Barnabas (Acts 15:22, 37-40). It seems clear, then, that Galatians 2:1-3 correlates with Acts 11:27-30 and not with Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council.

Thus, it seems that the Epistle to the Galatians was written after Paul's second

visit and probably soon after Paul's confrontation with Peter at Antioch (2:11-16) but before the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:1-29), when a kind of peaceful coexistence was finally agreed upon between Paul and his Gentile converts on the one hand and the Jerusalem leaders and their Jewish converts on the other.

Assuming that the foregoing analysis is correct, Galatians is logically the earliest of Paul's letters, preceding the Thessalonian epistles by three or four years.³ Galatians was probably written in the late 40s AD, prior to the exclusion of the Jews from Rome in AD 49 by Emperor Claudius. That event is noted both in Acts 18:2 and in Suetonius's *Claudius* 25.4 (see Bettenson 1963:3).⁴

CANONICITY AND TEXTUAL HISTORY

The Epistle to the Galatians has long been considered one of Paul's major epistles and, as such, has been included as part of the New Testament canon since about the end of the first century or beginning of the second century AD. For example, P46, dated to the second century, is a codex that includes Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians. Galatians is the third epistle in this collection.

The few minor issues of concern in the Greek text of Galatians will be discussed at the appropriate points in the commentary. Bruce Metzger offers only a few pages of comment on the text of Galatians in his detailed textual analysis of the New Testament (1971:589-599). The Greek critical texts, the Nestle-Aland 27th edition of *Novum Testamentum* and the United Bible Societies' fourth edition of the *Greek New Testament*, are quite reliable. The idea that Galatians is a compilation of other documents (which was once proposed) has virtually been abandoned, as Kümmel cogently states (1984:304).

LITERARY STYLE

As a former lawyer, I often compare Galatians to a legal brief in which Paul clearly expressed his frustration with the "foolish Galatians" (3:1). They had fallen for the skewed logic of legalistic teachers who were probably threatened by Jewish zealots or nationalists and had therefore resorted to a "circumcision drive" to prove their faithfulness to Jewish teaching. In so doing, they perverted the Christian gospel and emptied the grace of Christ of its meaning (1:6-7). In this epistle, Paul used the patterns of Greek rhetoric to develop a series of arguments focusing on the great principle of freedom in Christ (5:1) and on God's acceptance of all people through their faith in Christ—whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female (3:28). Paul believed that Christ's coming marked a new era; he firmly advocated to his straying followers that the era of the law had passed (3:24-25) and that, in the gift of the Spirit, all persons could call God their Father and inherit God's promise to Abraham (3:29; 4:6-7). These Judaizing teachers were totally wrong in trying to make Gentiles into Jews.

The process of composing this theological brief undoubtedly prepared Paul for the later Council of Jerusalem, where the gauntlet was thrown down by Judaizers there who argued that apart from circumcision, no one could be saved (Acts 15:1, 5).

These and other vivid expressions enhance the forcefulness of the letter and help readers to realize that Paul was locked in what he regarded as a life-and-death struggle for the fundamentals of the Christian gospel. It should be patently obvious to every reader of Galatians that Paul was totally unwilling to capitulate to those who wanted to maintain adherence to the formal laws of Moses as the basis for Christianity. He courageously took this stand despite the fact that it would at times bring him into conflict with the earliest disciples of Jesus (such as Peter; 2:11; cf. also James and John; 2:9), his own colleagues (such as Barnabas; 2:13), and even, possibly, an angel from heaven (1:8)! To say that Paul was convinced that he had the correct understanding of the gospel would be a magnificent understatement—he was willing to be anathematized (totally cursed) if he were found to have altered the message of the gospel (1:8).

This epistle, then, is not just about theological ideas. It is about each Christian's life of commitment to their ongoing salvation. It is about how Christ, through the Spirit of God, can transform human life into a great journey of responsible freedom. It is about a life of self-giving service (6:1-10) that far supersedes rigid obedience to law or tradition (5:13-14). Internalizing the significance of Paul's thunderous message to the Galatians should be a life-changing event—may it be so! (This last expression captures the meaning of "Amen"—the last word of the epistle.)

OUTLINE

- I. Introduction (1:1-5)
- II. An Exposing Rebuke (1:6-10)
- III. Paul's Defense of the Gospel: A Historical Rehearsal (1:11-2:13)
 - A. Paul's Divine Call to Mission (1:11-17)
 - B. Paul's First Visit as a Christian to Jerusalem and Beyond (1:18-24)
 - C. Paul's Second Visit: A Strategic Conference (2:1-10)
 - D. The Confrontation at Antioch (2:11-13)
- IV. The Significance of Antioch: A Statement of the Issue (2:14-21)
- V. Paul's Rationale for Salvation by Faith in Christ Jesus (3:1-4:31)
 - A. Four Proofs against Legalism (3:1-18)
 1. A shocking rebuke (3:1-5)
 2. A biblical example: Abraham (3:6-9)
 3. The curse of the law (3:10-14)
 4. Analogy from the promises of the covenant (3:15-18)
 - B. The Purpose of the Law (3:19-22)
 - C. The Nature of God's Authentic Children (3:23-4:7)
 1. Guardianship prior to Christ (3:23-25)
 2. The new community in Christ (3:26-29)
 3. The great transition: from slavery to adoption as children of God (4:1-7)

- D. Paul's Pastoral Concern for the Galatians (4:8-20)
- E. An Illustrative Appeal from the Old Testament: Abraham's Two Children (4:21-31)
- VI. The Way of Liberty (5:1-6:10)
 - A. The Threat to Liberty Epitomized in Circumcision (5:1-12)
 - B. The True Model of Freedom to Love (5:13-15)
 - C. The Resource of the Spirit for the Life of Liberty (5:16-26)
 - D. The Freedom to Serve (6:1-10)
- VI. Paul's Conclusion (6:11-18)

ENDNOTES

1. Though it has been subject to debate among scholars, I suggest that Ephesians is a letter of this type, in which the amanuensis had some influence on content. In particular, it seems to evidence some Lucan patterns of writing. To mention only a couple examples, it has the idea of a dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles drawn from the Temple imagery that is so important to Luke (cf. Eph 2:14), and it contains the only mention in the New Testament of being "filled with the Holy Spirit" outside of Luke and Acts (Eph 5:18).
2. This apparent discrepancy between Paul and Luke has prompted some scholars to think that Acts is chronologically unreliable (Haenchen 1971:400-439; Funk 1956:130-136; Beare 1943:295-306). While space and the focus of this commentary do not permit discussion of these views, it is clear that Baur's ghost has not yet vanished (cf. Baur 1875). The works of Hemer (1977:81-88; 1989:159-220, 277-307) and Polhill (1992:50-52, 320-332) give helpful treatments on the reliability of Acts in this section.
3. A brief reading of Paul's writings might suggest that the Thessalonian correspondence was the earliest of the epistles since it deals with an issue that the early church faced almost immediately—namely, the problem of Christians dying unexpectedly prior to the anticipated early return of Christ. The church, however, was faced with the issues in Galatians before there was general anxiety about eschatological matters. Many scholars date 1 and 2 Thessalonians at the beginning of the 50s AD (see Borchert 1986a:14-15).
4. This dating raises the issue of theological kinship between Galatians and Romans. The letter to the Romans was written in the mid- to late 50s AD, but theological kinship does not necessitate chronological kinship—the two books could have been written ten years apart. Galatians does appear to be an earlier form of some arguments that are later revisited and expanded in Romans. Some of the typically rabbinic arguments of Galatians are not revisited in Romans, probably because circumcision was not the main issue there. Instead, there are additional emphases on both Jewish and Hellenistic patterns of logic and psychology in Romans (see Borchert 1986b:81-92).

COMMENTARY ON *Galatians*

◆ I. Introduction (1:1–5)

This letter is from Paul, an apostle. I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority, but by Jesus Christ himself and by God the Father, who raised Jesus from the dead.

²All the brothers and sisters* here join me in sending this letter to the churches of Galatia.

³May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* give you grace and peace.

⁴Jesus gave his life for our sins, just as God our Father planned, in order to rescue us from this evil world in which we live. ⁵All glory to God forever and ever! Amen.

1:2 Greek *brothers*; also in 1:11. 1:3 Some manuscripts read *God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ*.

NOTES

1:1 Paul. The epistle opens with a reference to Paul, its primary sender. Jewish parents in Paul's time frequently gave their sons two names so that they could function easily in both the Jewish and the Hellenistic worlds. Thus, Saul was his Jewish name and Paul his Hellenistic one. (The same practice applied, for example, to John Mark; cf. Acts 12:12.)

an apostle. This word is derived from the Gr. verb, *apostellein* [T^G649, Z^G690] (to send), which is parallel to the Latin *missus*, from which we get the English word "missionary." In the NT, *apostolos* [T^G652, Z^G693] may carry this broad meaning (see Rom 16:7), but in the Pauline letters, it generally refers to a select group of "sent ones" who were commissioned personally by Jesus to act as his ambassadors in proclaiming the gospel. Paul was included in this group (see comments below).

I was not appointed by any group of people or any human authority. Lit., "neither by men nor through man." Two different Gr. prepositions are used: *apo* [T^G575, Z^G608] ("from," used as a preposition of source) and *dia* [T^G1223, Z^G1328] ("through," used here as a preposition of derivative agency). The Gr. behind the NLT's "any group" and "human authority" is a generic rendering of *anthrōpos* [T^G444, Z^G476] (humanity). Paul's commissioning had been directly from the risen Lord, apart from any human sources or agents (cf. Acts 26:14-18).

1:2 All the brothers and sisters. It is not entirely clear who this includes, whether the missionary team with Paul or a particular church. In this case, it could well have included all the Christians, or alternatively, the leaders of the church at Antioch in Syria, if that is where the letter originated (see Dunn 1993:29-30). In other letters, Paul added the names of one or two colleagues who joined him in writing a letter (Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1); the expansive reference here is unusual.

the churches of Galatia. This expression is very brief in comparison with other Pauline letters; it does not identify the churches of Galatia as churches "of God" or "of God and Christ" or call the Christians "saints" or "faithful ones." This lack of positive attributions

fits well with the glaring lack of commendation from Paul for the recipients of this letter. This becomes more apparent in 1:6, where Paul typically provides a thanksgiving statement after the greeting (cf. Col 1:3-10; 1 Thess 1:2-10)—here it is completely omitted.

1:3 *God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* This reading has the support of certain mss (Ⲛ A P 33), but it is just as likely that Paul wrote “from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ” (as found in Ⲙ46 Ⲙ51 B D F G H 1739 Ⲙ). While the difference in the two readings is minimal, the emphasis in the latter seems to accentuate the Christian’s personal relationship with the Godhead through Christ. The linking of “God” with “Jesus” (as in 1:1) is a Christian affirmation of their oneness of purpose, which is further explained in 1:4. The term *Lord* (*kurios* [T^G2962, Z^G3261]), used with the names of *Jesus* and *Christ*, emphasizes the post-Resurrection confession of Jesus as victorious Lord. The synoptic Gospels suggest that this designation could have been used by Jesus himself (see Matt 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42). In any event, the term became a building block in the Christian proclamation of the reigning Christ (see Acts 2:34-35; 1 Cor 15:25).

grace and peace. These words introduce the greeting part of the letter. The typical Gr. greeting, *chairein*, has been altered slightly to “grace” (*charis* [T^G5485, Z^G5921]), a weighty Christian word. It connotes God’s marvelous self-giving love and forgiveness to us through Jesus and has its theological roots in the OT concept of the “lovingkindness” of God (*chesed* [T^H2617, Z^H2876]). The second element of the greeting, “peace” (*eirēnē* [T^G1515, Z^G1645]), is the typical Semitic greeting of welcome, which pronounces rest and peace (*shalom* [T^H7965, Z^H8934]). The combination of these two greetings was undoubtedly an early Christian innovation used by Paul and others, as is evident in Peter’s letters (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2) and in the Apocalypse of John (Rev 1:4). Sometimes “mercy” is inserted between the two words (cf. 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2; 2 John 1:3), and sometimes mercy is substituted for grace (cf. Jude 1:2), but the meaning is basically the same. Early Christians quite consistently maintained this order of the words, suggesting their theological awareness that God’s grace precedes peace.

1:4 *Jesus gave his life for our sins.* The preposition “for” is in question. Some mss (Ⲙ51 Ⲛ¹ B H 0278) read *huper* [T^G5228, Z^G5642] (on behalf of), while others (Ⲙ46 Ⲛ* A D F G H 1739 Ⲙ) read *peri* [T^G4012, Z^G4309] (concerning). Manuscript evidence is in favor of the second reading, as is the observation that scribes would have been more likely to change *peri* to *huper* because *huper* is the more frequently used preposition in expressions pertaining to Jesus’ death “on behalf of” our sins. While *huper* may enhance a substitutionary view of the Atonement (the sacrifice of Christ), *peri* is an elastic term that can also include such a view.

1:5 *forever and ever.* The Greeks had no word for eternity because their idea of time was not linear but cyclical. Gradually, the Hebrews enhanced their linear concept of time and added prefixes to *’olam* to express their expanded ideas which emerged from the earlier idea of Sheol. (For an extended discussion on eternity, see excursus 33 in Borchert 2002:360-367.) Christians such as Paul, therefore, had to speak of eternity or “foreverness” using such descriptions as “unto the eons of eons” or “ages of ages.” (For a further discussion of *aion* see TDNT 1.197-209.)

COMMENTARY

Paul used a typical Hellenistic format in his letter writing. The introduction to this epistle thus includes (1) the writer (Paul), (2) the recipients (the churches of Galatia), (3) a greeting (from all the brothers and sisters), and (4) a blessing (grace and peace). The body of such a letter usually began with some gracious remarks to or about the recipients, such as thankfulness for the relationship which the writer had or hoped to have with them (see, e.g., Col 1:3-10; 1 Thess 1:2-10).

While Paul used the general Hellenistic form, the content of his introductions conformed to his Christian perspectives, with a somewhat different focus for each epistle. The beginning of the Epistle to the Romans, for example, is quite extended and shows a very gracious spirit on Paul's part. The beginning of Galatians is just the opposite—it is brief and omits the usual Pauline statement of thanksgiving, signaling Paul's very different purpose and spirit in this letter.

In the opening line, Paul identifies himself as an apostle because he was commissioned by the risen Christ to proclaim the gospel (1 Cor 15:8-11), not by any human agent. In saying this, Paul was laying the groundwork for a defense of his apostleship, the authoritative role that allowed him to affirm the truths of the gospel in contradiction to the falsehoods the Galatians had heard from various Judaizing opponents. As discussed in the introduction, Paul had raised up the churches of Galatia on his first missionary journey (see Acts 13:1–14:28). Evidently, some time soon after Paul's visit, the Galatians had been diverted from the simple tenets of the gospel: faith in Jesus Christ—his death for their sins and his resurrection. These two important events are mentioned by Paul in his introduction (1:1, 4).

The expression "Jesus gave his life for our sins" is a clear reference to the crucifixion. The Greek emphasizes the fact that Jesus gave himself willingly in his death rather than indicating that humanity had power to overcome him (cf. John 10:18). Paul added "for our sins" because he viewed Jesus' death as having a purpose—namely, accomplishing God's plan of salvation. This Jesus who was crucified was ultimately victorious because he was raised from the dead.

The death and resurrection of Jesus are intended to save believers from this evil age (1:4). Paul firmly believed in the Jewish idea of two ages: the present age, in which the powers of evil are rampant, and the age to come, in which they will be destroyed (cf. Jewish apocalypses such as 2 *Baruch* and 4 *Ezra* for their ideas on the present evil age). For Paul, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus marked a decisive moment in history when God made it clear to the evil powers that they would not ultimately triumph. Their end is destruction (see, e.g., 1 Cor 2:6-9; 15:20-28; Eph 1:18–2:7; 2 Thess 2:1-8; Rev 19:11–20:15).

The concluding doxology (1:5) reminds readers that God is the ultimate center in Paul's theology. All things will ultimately be subject to God (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). The idea of "glory" recalls Old Testament descriptions of God's presence on Mount Sinai, in the Tabernacle, or Tent of Meeting, and in the Temple (Exod 24:16; 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:11). Glory (*doxa* [^{T61391}, ^{Z61518}]) usually, though not always, carries the ideas of radiance and splendor generally associated with majesty. Ascribing glory to God is a rightful recognition of God's rule over all things. Such praise belongs to God forever.

In this introduction, Paul addressed his straying children in Galatia, setting out with crystal clarity exactly who he was: a divinely appointed agent of Jesus, the resurrected Messiah. The Galatians had accepted some deceptive teachers who had annulled the power of the gospel by their teaching and openly criticized Paul. He thus began his letter by announcing to them—in no uncertain terms—that he had received his apostolic commission directly from Christ and from the God who raised

Jesus from the dead, not from mere mortals. In the process, he also summarized the crucial theological assertions about Jesus that he would later bring to bear on their error. He referred to the recipients as “churches” but reminded them that the present age was filled with evil. The answer to evil is not human effort but the self-giving death of Jesus, who died and was raised in accordance with God’s divine purpose.

When the reader realizes that the Galatians had turned away from the gospel, it is clear why Paul’s introductory words are so terse and straightforward. Paul was angry with the Galatians, and he was about to rebuke them severely.

◆ II. An Exposing Rebuke (1:6-10)

⁶I am shocked that you are turning away so soon from God, who called you to himself through the loving mercy of Christ.* You are following a different way that pretends to be the Good News ⁷but is not the Good News at all. You are being fooled by those who deliberately twist the truth concerning Christ.

⁸Let God’s curse fall on anyone, including us or even an angel from heaven, who

1:6 Some manuscripts read *through loving mercy*.

preaches a different kind of Good News than the one we preached to you. ⁹I say again what we have said before: If anyone preaches any other Good News than the one you welcomed, let that person be cursed.

¹⁰Obviously, I’m not trying to win the approval of people, but of God. If pleasing people were my goal, I would not be Christ’s servant.

NOTES

1:6 The introduction of this section is reminiscent of other Gr. letters of rebuke (cf. Longenecker 1990:11, 14), though its focus is particularly theocentric.

I am shocked. Gr., *thaumazō* [T^G2296, Z^G2513]; perhaps more forcefully translated, “I am stunned.”

turning away so soon. It is debated whether these “turncoats” were apostate. The use of the present tense may suggest that the process was still going on (so George 1994:91), but it could also be the historical present tense. The note of “so soon” (*tacheōs* [T^G5030, Z^G5441]) is also intriguing. It may be that Paul was recalling how soon, after the Passover and the crossing of the sea, the Israelites had deserted God for the golden calf in the wilderness (Exod 32:7-8)—the situation appears to be quite parallel.

the loving mercy of Christ. There are several variants in the mss related to the phrase “of Christ”; some add “Jesus” (D syr^h* *—so TR and KJV) and others substitute “of God” (327). The most significant variant is the omission of “of Christ” (P⁴⁶vid F* G H^{vid}), but an impressive combination of witnesses (P⁵¹ N A B 33 1739) do include “of Christ.” I am inclined to agree with most English translations that it belongs in the text.

1:8 curse. This idea has its roots in the OT concept of *kherem* [T^H2764, Z^H3051], which connotes condemnation and utter destruction.

an angel. Some Jews and Christians of the first century were not hesitant to speak about angelic visitations. During the intertestamental period, discussions concerning angels had multiplied. Drawing upon Dan 12:1, Jews named archangels such as Michael, Uriel, Gabriel, Raphael, and Raquel (each name ended with the suffix “el,” indicating that they were agents of God; cf. 1 *Enoch* 1:20; 4 *Ezra* 2-4).