

FROM THESSALONICA TO PHILEMON: PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL LEGACY

SESSION I (SEPTEMBER 7): INTRODUCTION TO PAUL'S THEOLOGY AND CONTEXT

1

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation. So also our beloved brother Paul wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, speaking of this as he does in all his letters. There are some things in them hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other scriptures. You therefore, beloved, since you are forewarned, beware that you are not carried away with the error of the lawless and lose your own stability. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

2 Peter 3:14-18

2

THE CONTEXT OF 2 PETER 3

- Purpose of 2 Peter
 - Sent to a Christian audience facing challenges from false teachers, deniers of Christ's promised return, moral laxity.
 - Encourages believers to remain steadfast in faith, grow in knowledge of God, resist false teachings that distort the Gospel
- Immediate context of 2 Peter 3
 - Responds to scoffers who deny the promise of Christ's second coming, emphasizing God's patience the delay being an opportunity for repentance and salvation
 - Urges believers to live holy and godly lives in anticipation of Christ's return and the coming judgment

3

THE CONTEXT OF 2 PETER 3

- Specific context of 2 Peter 3:14-18
 - Connects God's patience (delay of Christ's return) to the theme of salvation
 - Encourages believers to remain steadfast in faith, grow in knowledge of God, resist false teachings that distort the Gospel
 - Notes that Paul also wrote about this topic, reinforcing the unity of apostolic teaching.
 - Warns that "ignorant and unstable people" distort Paul's writings, just as they do other Scriptures, leading to their own destruction.

4

IMPLICATIONS

- Paul's apostolic authority
 - Peter's mention of Paul's writings means that the letters of Paul were already considered authoritative (on par with Scriptures) albeit complex enough to be misused without proper understanding
 - 2 Peter was written between 80 to 100 AD. By then, Paul's letters were already in circulation among Christian communities. Peter's mention of "other Scriptures" in 3:16 suggests that a Canon was already forming and that Peter considered Paul's letters as part of that early Canon.

5

THE SEVEN UNDISPUTED LETTERS OF PAUL (CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER)

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| • I Thessalonians | • Romans |
| • Galatians | • Philippians |
| • I Corinthians | • Philemon |
| • 2 Corinthians | |

6

SUMMARY TABLE

Letter	Date	Journey Period	Where written	Church
1 Thessalonians	50-51 AD	Second	Corinth	Thessalonica
Galatians	53-54 AD	Second/Third	Ephesus	Galatia
1 Corinthians	54-55 AD	Third	Ephesus	Corinth
2 Corinthians	55-56 AD	Third	Macedonia	Corinth
Romans	56-57 AD	Third	Corinth	Rome
Philippians	58-62 AD	Imprisonment	Rome	Philippi
Philemon	58-62 AD	Imprisonment	Rome	Colossae

7

PAUL'S APOSTOLIC CALLING

- Divine commission through revelation
 - Direct call from God through a revelation of Jesus Christ, not from human appointment.
 - Unique relative to the other apostles
 - Key references: Galatians 1:1-16; Acts 9:1-9; 1 Corinthians 9:1
- Mission to the Gentiles
 - Focus on Gentiles reflects his believe in God's plan for all regardless of ethnicity.
 - The mission to the Gentiles caused conflict with Judaizers who insisted Gentiles follow Jewish law.
 - Key references: Romans 1:16, 11:13, 15:15-16; Galatians 2:8, 11-14, 3:28

8

PAUL'S APOSTOLIC CALLING

- Apostolic authority and suffering
 - Paul's authority is from God, rooted in God's grace
 - Paul's sufferings validate his commitment to the Gospel
 - Key references: 1 Corinthians 4:9-13; 2 Corinthians 11:5-12 to 12:10
- Purpose of Paul's calling
 - To proclaim "Christ crucified"
 - To establish churches and nurture their faith
 - Key references: 1 Corinthians 1:23, 4:15

9

PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- Justification by faith
 - Righteousness (right standing with God) comes through faith in Christ, not through works of the Jewish law.
 - This doctrine responds to the Judaizing controversy: Gentiles need not adopt Jewish practices to be part of God's people
 - Justification by faith universalizes salvation making it accessible to all
 - Key references: Romans 3:21-28; Galatians 2:11-14, 16

10

PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- Christ's death and resurrection
 - The cross and resurrection are the foundation of Paul's gospel.
 - The cross demonstrates God's love and atones for sin while the resurrection guarantees believers' future hope
 - The dual event of the Christ's death and resurrection is the basis for salvation and the new life in Christ
 - Key references: I Corinthians 1:23, 15:3-4; Romans 4:25, 5:8; I Thessalonians 4:14

11

PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- Role of the Spirit
 - The Holy Spirit empowers believers, transforms their lives and unites them in Christ.
 - The Holy spirit is God's gift to believers, fulfilling the promise of a new covenant and enabling ethical living without reliance on the law
 - The Holy Spirit connects believers to Christ and to each other
 - Key references: Romans 7:6, 8:1-11; Galatians 3:14, 5:22-23; I Corinthians 12:13

12

PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- Eschatological hope
 - Paul's theology is shaped by the expectation of Christ's return and the resurrection of believers
 - Early Christians faced persecution and uncertainty, prompting Paul to emphasize hope in God's ultimate victory
 - The eschatological framework motivates ethical living and perseverance, as believers await God's kingdom
 - Key references: I Thessalonians 4:13-18; Romans 8:18-25; I Corinthians 15:54-57

13

PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- Unity in Christ
 - Paul emphasizes the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ
 - This theology counters divisions in churches
 - Unity reflects God's plan to reconcile humanity through Christ
 - Key references: Galatians 3:28; Romans 10:12; I Corinthians 1:10-17

14

PAUL'S THEOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

- Ethics and new life
 - Faith in Christ leads to a transformed life, guided by love and the Spirit
 - Paul addresses practical issues to guide churches in living out their faith
 - Ethical teaching flows from theological convictions
 - Key references: Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 2:1-5; 1 Corinthians 6:12-20; Philemon 10-17.

15

CONCLUSIONS

- Paul's divine commission drives his proclamation of justification by faith, himself a God's instrument to bring Gentiles in the covenant
- Paul's focus on Christ's death and resurrection underpins his gospel, giving authority to his mission and hope to his churches
- Paul's Gentile mission reflects his theology of unity
- Paul's sufferings mirror Christ's self—giving love, reinforcing his ethical call to humility and service
- Paul's eschatological hope sustains his perseverance and motivates his churches to endure.

16

SESSION 2: I THESSALONIANS – HOPE IN CHRIST'S RETURN

SEPTEMBER 14 AT 9:30AM

READING: I THESSALONIANS 1:2-10, 4:13-18