"In this balanced, perceptive, and much-needed volume, Fr. Witherup illuminates the many aspects of Paul as (theological) pastor, or 'shepherd,' and how they are worked out in the real communities represented by the thirteen Pauline letters. Fr. Witherup's insights are relevant not only for Catholic pastors but for all Christians with responsibility for the life and health of churches and other Christian groups. A gem of a book."

—Michael J. Gorman, Raymond E. Brown Professor of Biblical and Theological Studies, St. Mary's Seminary and University, Baltimore

"What kind of a pastor was Paul? How did he deal with the problems and questions that arose in the churches he established? In this magnificent book, Fr. Ronald Witherup addresses an area of Pauline studies that has been sorely neglected—Saint Paul's pastoral theology. Written in a clear and engaging style, this volume presents a comprehensive study of Paul's letters that sheds light on the ways the great apostle pastored the church. In doing so, Witherup reminds us how the gospel can and should guide our pastoral ministry today."

—Frank J. Matera, professor emeritus,
The Catholic University of America

"Fr. Witherup reads the entire Pauline letter corpus as lessons in pastoral theology from an apostle who 'loved his communities,' was deeply concerned for their welfare, and had created an extensive network of 'fellow laborers,' both men and women, to spread the gospel. Paul did not present his theological insights as a philosophical system to be adopted by followers. Nor are the churches addressed in the letters as his own special brand. Viewing all situations 'in light of the gospels' includes willingness to suffer like Christ and confidence in God's victory. So spiritual directors of ministry candidates might find clues in Witherup's chapter headings for vocation retreats."

—Pheme Perkins, Joseph Professor of Catholic Spirituality emerita,
Boston College

"In *Paul's Pastoral Ministry in the Light of the Gospel*, Ronald Witherup successfully reaches the two Christian audiences intended for the book: lay people and academics. For lay people in all branches of the Christian family, this book will be a helpful introduction to the thirteen New Testament letters attributed to Paul. For academics who study Paul, this book is a must read! In academically credible and exegetically responsible ways, Witherup breathes life into the Pauline corpus, raising it from the laboratory table to the context in which it took shape and was first read—pastoral ministry."

—Mark Reasoner, professor of theology,
Marian University, Indianapolis

Paul's Pastoral Ministry in the Light of the Gospel

Ronald D. Witherup, PSS



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To my former students over the years,
whose questions and observations on the Apostle Paul
fostered deeper reflection.

CONTENTS

Abbreviations ix
Preface xi

Introduction 1
1. Vocation in the Light of the Gospel 13
2. The Nature of Church in the Light of the Gospel 30
3. Pauline Ministry in the Light of the Gospel 45
4. 1–2 Thessalonians: Affirmation and Hope in the Light of the Gospel 72
5. 1–2 Corinthians: Sacramental and Communal Leadership in the Light of the Gospel 86
6. Galatians: Defending Truth in the Light of the Gospel 105
7. Philippians: Suffering and Joy in the Light of the Gospel 119
8. Philemon: Confronting Difficult Questions in the Light of the Gospel 129
9. Romans: Theology and Ministry in the Light of the Gospel 136
10. Colossians and Ephesians: The Development of Paul's Pastoral Theology in the Light of the Gospel 153

11. 1–2 Timothy and Titus: Supporting Colleagues in Ministry in the Light of the Gospel 167
12. Learning Pastoral Ministry from Paul in the Light of the Gospel 176

Annotated Suggestions for Further Reading 191
Index of Subjects 197

ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG	*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Edited by F. W. Danker, W. Bauer, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich. 3rd ed. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BSCBAA	Biblical Studies from the Catholic Biblical Association of America
au. trans.	author's translation
ca.	circa, around
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
cf.	compare
DPHL	Scot McKnight, Lynn H. Cohick, and Nijay K. Gupta, eds. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2023.
EDEJ	John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow, eds. *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010.

JANT	Amy-Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, eds. *The Jewish Annotated New Testament*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
LNTS [JSNT]	Library of New Testament Studies [*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*]
LXX	Septuagint
NABRE	New American Bible Revised Edition (2011)
NRSVue	New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition (2021)
NT	New Testament
NTL	New Testament Library
OT	Old Testament
pl.	plural
sg.	singular
v./vv.	verse/verses
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World

PREFACE

Saint Paul became a preoccupation for me quite by accident, or perhaps better, by grace. It happened while I was academic dean at a Catholic seminary. Not being able to find a substitute teacher for the required course on Paul, owing to the regular professor's scheduled sabbatical, I ended up teaching the class. I consider it my own "Damascus road" experience. It was as if blinders fell off my eyes. I saw "the Apostle" for the first time with a clarity that I had hitherto not experienced. As a doctoral student, I had quite happily majored in the Synoptic Gospels, especially Matthew. My interest in narrative criticism, which was a new methodology at the time, reinforced this focus. Paul was always present, of course. We were obliged to take numerous classes in Paul's letters, but I had always maintained a certain distance from him. He seemed difficult to understand, at times contradictory, and contributed little to my narrative interests. Alas, I did not realize what I was missing. When I finally awakened to Pauline theology, its attraction drove me further to explore his letters and to comprehend just how much they have contributed to Christian theology and ministry. Note that both of these concepts are essential here. My approach is based on the conviction that Paul's letters display a critical blending of theology *and* pastoral ministry.

This book has been percolating for some twenty-five years. On and off during this time, I have had occasion to teach courses on Paul, to give conferences, to preach retreats using distinctively Pauline themes, and even to publish a few modest books on the Apostle. Instead of quenching my thirst for more Pauline theology, my appetite has been continually whetted. Some years ago, in the context of a Catholic Biblical Association Task Force on Paul, I delivered a paper defending the need for a pastoral theology of Paul's letters. This was later reworked considerably and published in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* as my presidential address.[1] It can serve as a kind of overview of my approach in this book.

While it may be risky, I wish to address two types of audience simultaneously. On the one hand, I wish to reach a broad, nontechnical but biblically literate audience, who in fact have often been the beneficiaries of my lectures, courses, and conferences delivered over the years. Thus, I endeavor to keep footnotes to a minimum and to avoid overly detailed technical discussions or lengthy exegetical explanations. On the other hand, I want colleagues to know some of the secondary resources I have used, and to know how I arrived at some of my exegetical conclusions in conversation with the many experts who have preceded me. To that end, I will offer only a few representative examples from each Pauline letter of where the intersection of theology and pastoral practice is evident. While this approach may not satisfy the most demanding scholarly criteria, I trust it will provide some justification for the path I have followed.

The Plan of the Book

The introduction sets forth with the aid of charts my basic presuppositions about Paul the Apostle and his letters. Then, although it may seem counterintuitive, the first three chapters (1–3) lay out the fruit of my labors. By this I mean that they set forth in a more synthetic fashion the essentials of Paul's pastoral ministry and theology, which grew out of my

[1] Ronald D. Witherup, "Apart from these things I am pressured daily from my anxiety for all the churches" (2 Cor 11:28): The Intersection of Paul's Theology and Pastoral Practice," *CBQ* 85:1 (2023), 1–18.

interpretation of his letters. The next eight chapters (4–11) then present key interpretive elements of each of all thirteen of Paul's letters in the NT canon, the seven undisputed letters (Rom, 1–2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess, and Phlm) and the six so-called Deutero-Pauline letters whose authorship is sometimes disputed (2 Thess, Col, Eph, 1–2 Tim, and Titus). These chapters are intended to illustrate how I arrived at my conclusions. The final chapter (12) pulls together various lessons from Paul's pastoral theology and ministry that I believe are still pertinent today.

In an effort to keep footnotes to a minimum, I often use a shortened reference for works listed in the list of abbreviations or in the suggested readings at the end of the book. Because Paul wrote in Koinē Greek, common to all the NT, I incorporate key vocabulary in transliteration rather regularly so that readers somewhat familiar with that language can follow my arguments with greater clarity. I trust, however, that others who may not know Greek but have some familiarity with NT study will benefit from my approach. Although I am a Roman Catholic and write from that perspective, I am ecumenically trained and have utilized many non-Catholic sources in my research, which have greatly benefitted me. I particularly hope that seminarians, ministers, priests, teachers, catechists, students, and anyone engaged in pastoral ministry will profit from this exposition.

Acknowledgments

Although writing is a solitary process, no book is created alone. In my case, because this book has been in process for so long, I have many people to thank, too many to be listed here. In addition to the many scholarly works on Paul and his theology that I have consulted over the years and which continue to appear at an astonishing rate, numerous colleagues have offered helpful input. I thank the participants of two task forces of the Catholic Biblical Association in which I have been privileged to participate, the Task Force on God in Paul's Letters and the Task Force on Baptism in Paul. Their feedback, input, and thoughtful questions have helped me to refine my own views over the years. I also am grateful to some individual colleagues whose feedback on earlier drafts of this book helped me to avoid pitfalls and misinterpretations, including Frank J. Matera, Brendan Byrne, SJ, Mark Reasoner,

Frederick J. Cwiekowski, PSS, the late John R. Donahue, SJ, and my colleague Thomas R. Hurst, PSS, who served as the Sulpician censor for this book. I also extend my gratitude to many seminary students, priest and bishop retreatants, and attendees at public lectures I have given on Paul over the years for their questions and thoughtful observations, which assisted my reflections on the pastoral implications of Paul's ministry and theology. To them I dedicate this book. The Knott Library at St. Mary's Seminary & University in Baltimore, especially the director, Thomas Raszewski, along with Anita Prien and Madeline Mora, also deserve my gratitude for their extraordinary service in tracking down resources for me and for purchasing important books for the library collection. Finally, I thank Hans Christoffersen and the entire team at the Liturgical Press for their patience with this project and for their expertise in the book's final design and publication. As always, I alone am responsible for any errors or shortcomings.

R.D.W.
Ascension Thursday, 2026

Introduction

"So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us." (1 Thess 2:8)

Despite the enormous number of books on Paul published in the last thirty years—several of them extremely important explorations of Pauline theology—I perceived that none of these had exactly addressed thoroughly a key issue in the Pauline corpus. My focus became how Pauline pastoral practice influenced his theology, and how his overarching theology impacted his response to the pastoral situations he encountered as missionary, evangelizer, founder of churches, and indeed, pastor. To state my thesis succinctly: Paul's theology and pastoral practice simultaneously developed over time—by God's grace and the gift of the Holy Spirit—the one influencing the other. As is widely acknowledged, Paul was not a systematic theologian. Even though many of his ideas serve as the foundation of so many Christian teachings, his interest was never simply theology for its own sake. He was a pastor, though he never uses that term of himself. His theology was applied to specific pastoral situations Paul encountered in his ministry, and I believe as it developed and deepened, those very situations helped hone his theological perceptions.

Part of the title of this book deserves some explanation because it comes from a Pauline letter. Although Paul was clearly no systematic theologian, when scholars study his purported theology they usually seek some Pauline expression that helps to systematize his thought in a more comprehensive way than he himself ever did. Thus, some latch on to the notions of "grace" or "justification" or "faith" as the all-encompassing idea to unify the Apostle's thought. For my part, I have chosen an expression from 2 Corinthians 4:4. In the context of expressing his own ministry (*diakonía*) and that of his colleagues, Paul speaks of the nature of his "gospel" (*euangélion*) and the attempts of the powers of this world to block the efficacy of his message, "to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God." The expression, "the light of the gospel" struck me as particularly appropriate as a kind of description of the goal of Paul's pastoral ministry. Notice that the expression is not "in light of the gospel," which could be taken as a rationale. Rather, it is "in *the light* of the gospel" (*ton phōtismón tou euangelíou*). He wants to bring people out of the darkness of sin and death and into the light of the gospel, which is salvation. And the message is very Christocentric. The light reveals the "glory of Christ," the image of God.[1] The "gospel" is Paul's shorthand description of what we might term "the Christ event." It is an all-encompassing concept that embraces the incarnation, life, ministry, and especially the death and resurrection of Jesus as the Christ, the Messiah, and his return as judge (technically called the Parousia). Since Paul's letters (epistles) antedate by some decades the four canonical Gospels, his terminology does not concern them.[2] Rather, it is about the gracious action of what God has done in Christ Jesus for the salvation of the world. The passion

[1] Just two verses later, Paul invokes the image of God creating light to shine in the darkness, producing "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). Paul's *theo*logical and christological interests merge here in the desire to remove the blindness of unbelievers, which is what his gospel does.

[2] Periodically, some scholars have proposed considering one or another gospel as earlier than Paul's letters. A recent example is found in Michael J. Gorman, *Paul and John in Harmony: A Theological and Historical Exploration* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2026), esp. 157–80. Such proposals may have some merit, but they have thus far not prevailed, though Gorman's thesis is too new to see how it will be received.

for proclaiming the gospel is evident in many Pauline passages, but none more so than 1 Corinthians 9:16, which is a clarion call to his ministry of evangelization: "If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!" In addition, so committed is Paul to this endeavor that he desires to share his very self in the performance of this ministry, which is expressed in the quotation from 1 Thessalonians at the head of this chapter.

Why a Pastoral Theology of Paul's Letters?

Theologies of Paul abound. Some of them even avert to the fact that Paul was a pastoral theologian. Recently, for instance, an important Pauline scholar, N. T. Wright, has written the following:

> [T]he reason Paul was "doing theology" was not that he happened to have the kind of brain that delighted in playing with and rearranging large, complex abstract ideas. He was doing theology because the life of God's people depended on it, depended on his doing it initially *for* them, then as soon as possible *with* them, and then on them being able to go on doing it for themselves. All Paul's theology is thus pastoral theology, not in the sense of an unsystematic therapeutic model which concentrates on meeting the felt needs of the "client," but in the sense that the shepherd needs to feed the flock with clean food and water, and keep a sharp eye out for wolves. For that, pastoral theology needs to be crystal clear, thought out and presented in a way that teaches others to think as well. (emphases original)[3]

I agree with this statement, and some other scholars echo it in their own writings. More than forty years ago, while commenting on the dearth of scholarly works exploring Paul's pastoral theology, Victor Paul Furnish expressed what is really at the heart of this book: "it is this interrelationship between theology and ministry which deserves our attention."[4]

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[3] Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 1.568–69.

[4] Victor Paul Furnish, "Theology and Ministry in the Pauline Letters," in Earl E. Shelp and Ronald Sunderland, eds., *A Biblical Basis for Ministry* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 101–44, here 105.

Another Pauline scholar, James Dunn, who considered pastoral aspects of Paul's letters "still relatively neglected" in his day, observed similarly a connection between Paul's pastoral practice and his theology while discussing Paul as a missionary evangelist. As evident as Paul's theological interests are, Dunn explains:

> But as much if not more of Paul's time and energies were actually spent on *pastoring* the churches of which he had laid the foundations, in nurturing his small congregations through the dangers of infancy and the traumas of youth.[5]

So, there has been some recognition of the pastoral dimensions of Paul's letters and more recently even a few extensive books on the topic (see the suggested readings).

To be fair, we should also note that some interest in Paul's pastoral aspects extends far back into the patristic era. St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), the most prominent commentator on Paul's letters among the church fathers, made many observations about Paul's pastoral practice in his homilies and commentaries, which have more recently been emphasized.[6] But when you read most theologies of Paul, what you find is Paul's thought divided into convenient modern categories: eschatology, anthropology, Christology, ecclesiology, soteriology, pneumatology, ethics, etc. While this is a valid and helpful exercise, it seems to me to miss the interplay between Paul's theological outlook and his pastoral practice. In my reading, the one influenced the other. *Paul was not simply imparting a theological message to his communities, nor was he merely addressing pastoral problems as they arose. He was doing both simultaneously.* That is what I hope this book will show. To my knowledge, although there are now a good number of books on aspects of Paul's pastoral practice (see the suggested reading list), I do not see that anyone has attempted a more comprehensive treatment of the

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[5] James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, Christianity in the Making, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2.587, emphasis in the original.

[6] See, for instance, the works of Margaret M. Mitchell, *The Heavenly Trumpet: John Chrysostom and the Art of Pauline Interpretation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), and *John Chrysostom on Paul: Praises and Problem Passages*, WGRW 48 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2022).

intersection between Paul's theological outlook and pastoral practice. But first I should clarify some vocabulary.

What Is "Pastoral Theology"?

The word "pastoral" can be slippery. It can be used in a formal sense of theology that is oriented toward the practice of ministry, such as one might encounter in a seminary formation program. Or it could mean simply "theology lite," in which emphasis is given to questions encountered in pastoral ministry without the rigor of serious and profound reflection on deeper theological perspectives. I have all too often encountered this approach in seminary ministry, when students complain that one or another course is too academic and not pastoral enough.

For this project, however, I propose to take pastoral theology in its most basic sense. Pastoral means first and foremost that which comes from the action of a pastor, a shepherd, one who cares for people, a congregation, or a church. The dictionary, for example, defines the word "pastoral" first in the sense of literal shepherding, and gives as a secondary meaning the spiritual care or guidance of people or actions relating to the pastor of a church.[7] One might think of it in the same way that the Second Vatican Council has been described as a pastoral ecumenical council as compared to previous doctrinal councils (such as Trent in the sixteenth century or Vatican I in the nineteenth).[8] Emphasis is thereby given to pastoral interests over doctrinal ones, which is not to say that pastoral councils are any less rigorous than doctrinal ones. The ultimate goal and orientation, however, are different. The teaching is intended somehow to affect the everyday lives of ordinary people, perhaps to make the Christian faith more understandable or easier to digest. Its purpose is not to define or clarify with precision church doctrines or to oppose serious errors or heresies.

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[7] *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 2003), 907.

[8] See, for example, Giuseppe Alberigo, "Transition to a New Age," in *History of Vatican II*, 5 vols., ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Joseph Komonchak (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, and Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 5.573–644, esp. 580–84.

Let me cite an example from the teaching of Pope St. John Paul II (d. 2005). In an important document on priestly formation, he writes about pastoral formation as one of the four dimensions, along with human, spiritual, and intellectual. He says the following about the pastoral dimension, which is where all four dimensions come together in a synthetic fashion:

> [Pastoral theology] needs to be studied therefore as the true and genuine theological discipline that it is . . . Pastoral theology is not just an art. Nor is it a set of exhortations, experiences and methods. It is theological in its own right, because it receives from the faith the principles and criteria for the pastoral action of the Church in history . . . .[9]

Viewed from this angle, pastoral theology is anything but "lite." It is where good theory and praxis meet, where sound theology is put into action on the level of people's lives. I believe no biblical author embodies this approach better than Paul the Apostle.

I should comment on the contributions of many theologies of Paul that have been published over many decades. Three main approaches are apparent. The first, and most common, is *thematic*. Scholars list the multiple themes in Paul's letters under many categories as a means of systematizing Paul's thought.[10] The second approach to Pauline theology is done in the context of *introductions* to Paul's life and thought, often written specifically as textbooks.[11] The third approach places Paul's theology in the larger context of *New Testament theology*, in which Paul is (rightly) identified as one of the most profound thinkers of the NT, and

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[9] Pope John Paul II, post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (1992), §54.

[10] I think of works by authors like Fernand Prat, Lucien Cerfaux, D. E. H. Whiteley, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, Gordon D. Fee, James D. G. Dunn, and many others. In the interest of space and a desire not to make the discussion too technical, I have not included here my analyses of these theologies. Such works keep appearing. Most recently, see Michael J. Gorman, *Life Transfigured*, in the suggested readings list.

[11] Examples include books by F. F. Bruce, John McRay, J. Christiaan Beker, Udo Schnelle, Douglas J. Moo, Michael J. Gorman, and Raymond E. Brown, among others.

sometimes even identified as the first Christian theologian.[12] All three approaches are valid and offer good insights. In recent years, however, the lack of attention to pastoral aspects has led to a good number of publications on aspects of Paul as a pastor (see the suggested reading list). This is a positive development. What I am attempting to do in this book, however, is to bridge a bit more broadly the connection between theology and praxis in Paul's letters.

I see three advantages to such an approach. First, it takes seriously that Paul was not writing letters simply to expound his theological ideas for their own sake. As everyone recognizes, Paul was not organizing a comprehensive system to explain the profundities of the faith. His letters are all occasional or contextual, written to specific audiences at specific times for specific reasons. This means, too, that all of his letters and not simply the "Pastoral Epistles" are pastoral.

Second, such an approach avoids the common pitfall of concentrating only on the most theologically substantive letters, primarily Galatians and Romans. These are all too often the main focus of attention in theologies of Paul. They also circumscribe the limits of discussion. Little wonder that a theology of Paul becomes basically a discussion of the law and gospel, justification and salvation, faith and works, with less attention given to other letters where these concepts are either missing or are secondary.

Third, there is in fact a concrete, modern pastoral advantage to such an approach. Catholics, in particular, at least on the parochial level, have not incorporated as much of Paul and his theology in our understanding of the faith as we should have.[13] A pastoral theology of Paul that takes into account the truly contextual, pastoral goal of his letters, and which incorporates insights from the Deutero-Pauline corpus as well—which are clearly in the Pauline tradition regardless of authorship—can offer

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[12] For example, works by Rudolf Bultmann, N. T. Wright, Frank J. Matera, and others.

[13] In reality, numerous Roman Catholic scholars in the past have explored the writings of Paul in great depth, such as Ferdinand Prat (1952), Lucien Cerfaux (1958), and Joseph Fitzmyer (1989), among others. Their works, however, rarely impacted preaching and teaching on a popular level. The Year of Paul celebrated in 2008–2009, proclaimed by Pope Benedict XVI for the bi-millennium of Paul's birth, provided a short-lived corrective in this regard.

a vision of how theology and the challenges of parochial ministry intersected in Paul's ministry and how we might do the same. In a sense, Paul is where orthodoxy and orthopraxis come together for the good of the church, the community of faith.

Presuppositions and Context

Before proceeding, I want to provide some presuppositions and context. Since this is not a general introduction to Paul and his letters, I will not attempt to be exhaustive or to defend every decision I have made. Many aspects for Pauline study will be left out of our discussion, but they can be easily explored in other resources listed at the back of the book. These presuppositions will provide background for what follows.

1. I assume with most scholars that of the thirteen letters bearing Paul's name in the NT canon, seven are undisputedly from Paul himself (Rom, 1–2 Cor, Gal, Phil, 1 Thess, Phlm) and the six Deutero-Pauline letters (2 Thess, Col, Eph, 1–2 Tim, Titus) are disputed. They may come perhaps from later disciples or colleagues of Paul, who may also have included genuine extracts from Paul's letters. Since I am interested in how Paul's actual pastoral practice as expressed in his extant letters intersects with his theology, and vice versa, I will include all thirteen letters that constitute the canonical Pauline tradition.
2. Although I believe Acts can sometimes provide solid historical evidence for Paul's life and ministry, it is nonetheless a secondary source that must be used with caution, owing to its own theological perspectives. Unless there is good reason to dismiss information from Acts as unhistorical, it can be used to supplement what is known of Paul and his ministry.
3. Unlike many older works, I do not consider the Pastoral Letters (1–2 Tim and Titus) to be the main place to look for Paul's pastoral practice, even if they actually originated with him. They are surely pastoral in nature, but they need not be the principal source of Paul's pastoral practice. In fact, my research has indicated that one need not even cite these three letters to arrive at a good understanding of Paul's pastoral theology, though they can enhance the final product once the undisputed letters are examined thoroughly.

4. One of the more important developments in Pauline scholarship in recent decades has been the emphasis on Paul as a Jew. Paul was born a Jew named Saul (Acts 13:9) in the diaspora perhaps between 5–10 CE in Tarsus, the capital city of the Roman province of Cilicia in Asia Minor. He was a zealous Pharisee (Phil 3:5; Acts 22:3) and I believe he remained Torah observant.[14] He never abandoned his Jewish identity though he struggled to explain how God would ultimately save the Jews if they did not accept Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, as evidenced by Romans 9–11. Importantly, however, Paul saw his primary mission as Apostle to the Gentiles, and this is the main context of all his missionary and pastoral activity. He was an avid Christ-follower who accepted his commissioning as an apostle seriously (Gal 1:11-17). The following two charts—one on Paul's self-description and one on information from Acts—give a convenient synopsis of what we can know historically about Saul/Paul of Tarsus on the basis of the NT.[15] Note that although priority is given to Paul's self-description, there is some overlap with the information that comes from Acts.

Passages	**Paul's self-description**
Rom 11:1	Paul is Israelite, descendant of Abraham, and of the tribe of Benjamin
Phil 3:4-6	Of Hebrew parents of the tribe of Benjamin; circumcised according to the law; became a Pharisee zealous for the law; persecuted the church
2 Cor 11:22-33	A faithful Israelite and Hebrew, descended from Abraham; has suffered greatly for faith in Jesus Christ; long catalogue of punishments, including the thirty-nine lashes (a Jewish form of punishment), beatings, stonings, multiple imprisonments, dangers of all kinds during his journeys; also was lowered in a basket at Damascus to escape King Aretas (cf. Acts 9:23-25)

[14] This is a debated point, but I see no reason to doubt Acts 21:24 that defends Paul as still Torah observant as a *Jewish* Christ-follower (cf. also Paul's Nazirite vow, Acts 18:18).

[15] For details about the historical Paul, see Schellenberg and Wendt, eds., *Handbook to the Historical Paul* in the suggested readings.

Gal 1:11-24	Received a "revelation" of Jesus Christ that changed his persecution of the church into full participation; was zealous in Jewish traditions; was called by God to preach to the Gentiles; only visited Peter (*Kephas*) and James the brother of the Lord after journeying to "Arabia" (most likely Nabatea); then journeyed to Syria and Cilicia
Gal 2:1-14	Confronted the "pillars" (James the brother of the Lord, Peter, John) with the need to adapt the gospel message for the Gentiles
Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8-9	Considers himself an "apostle to the Gentiles"

Passages	**Information from *The Acts of the Apostles***
Acts 13:9	"Saul, also known as Paul" (the former was his Jewish name among his family and friends while the latter was his Greco-Roman name)
23:16	Paul had other relatives, at least a sister and a nephew
7:58; 8:1; 22:20	Saul, while "a young man," consented to Stephen's execution
8:3; 9:21; 22:4	Saul tried to destroy the church
9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:12-18	Paul's dramatic and sudden conversion on the road to Damascus
21:39; 22:3	Paul was a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, Asia Minor
22:25-29; 23:27	Paul was a Roman citizen
18:3	Paul was a tentmaker (Greek, *skēnēpoios*)
22:3	Educated in Jerusalem under Rabbi Gamaliel I and was zealous for the law
9:23-25 (cf. 2 Cor 11:32-33)	Escaped capture in Damascus by being lowered from the wall in a basket
9:15; 26:17	Became chief "apostle to the Gentiles"
Chapters 9–28	Traveled extensively throughout the Mediterranean on at least three missionary journeys and a final journey to Rome while under arrest

5. I accept the main outlines of Paul's life to be as follows. After his conversion (ca. 32), better described as a prophetic call and

commissioning by the risen Lord Jesus, Paul was the understudy of Barnabas but quickly undertook the mission of evangelization with numerous other colleagues and coworkers. He traveled extensively throughout Asia Minor and the Mediterranean basin and developed the habit of writing letters to stay in touch with the communities he founded or visited. Curiously, Acts does not mention this custom. The period of his extant letter writing extends approximately from 51 to 64 CE. These provide the most important evidence of both his pastoral practice and his theological acuity. Although not recorded in the NT, I see no reason to doubt the ancient tradition that Paul died a martyr in Rome around 65–67 CE, about the same time as Simon Peter suffered martyrdom under the emperor Nero.

6. My own approach to the letters is primarily chronological rather than according to the canonical order in the NT. The main reason is that I believe Paul's theology developed in both scope and depth over time. Although there is much debate about the precise dating, provenance, and context of all Paul's letters, I accept roughly the order expressed in the chart below. Importantly, the extant non-disputed letters of Paul in the NT canon can be dated roughly to within about a fifteen-year period.

LETTERS	**APPROXIMATE DATE (CE)**	**PROVENANCE**
1 Thessalonians	51	Corinth
1 Corinthians	54–55	Ephesus
2 Corinthians	55–56	Macedonia
Galatians	54–55	Ephesus or Macedonia
Philippians	56	Ephesus, Rome, or Caesarea
Romans	57–58	Corinth
Philemon	62–64	Ephesus, Rome, or Caesarea
2 Thessalonians	mid-80s (or late 51–52 if genuine)	Corinth (?)
Colossians	mid-80s (or 54–56 if genuine)	Rome or Ephesus
Ephesians	late 80s (or 60–63 if genuine)	Rome (?)

2 Timothy	late 60s to mid- to late 80s (or 61–63 if genuine)	Rome
1 Timothy	late 60s to mid- to late 80s (or 62–64 if genuine)	Macedonia
Titus	late 60s to mid- to late 80s (or 62–64 if genuine)	Asia Minor or Macedonia

With this background in mind, we can now turn to an introductory exposition of Paul's pastoral ministry based upon my interpretation of his letters.

CHAPTER ONE

Vocation in the Light of the Gospel

"But even if we or an angel from heaven should proclaim to you a gospel contrary to what we proclaimed to you, let that one be accursed!" (Gal 1:8)

It all began with an encounter. Not any ordinary one but a genuine encounter, nonetheless. Paul states that he encountered the risen Lord Jesus somewhere near Damascus (Gal 1:12, 16, 17; Acts 22:6). He accepts this mysterious meeting as a divine call. The risen Lord invited him to become an evangelizer, an apostle sent forth to proclaim a message—the gospel of Jesus Christ (1 Cor 9:16; Acts 22:21). He was invited to bring the light of the gospel into a world much in need of that light.

This book proposes Paul the Apostle as a model for contemporary ministry on the basis of the pastoral theology of his letters. It should not be surprising, then, that a proper beginning point is found in the concept of *vocation*. Paul, of course, never uses the word. But then he never uses the word "pastor" of himself either. Yet he acts like one; he embodies one. Even though he would not use the vocabulary of vocation to describe his call as an apostle, he is adamant that he did not choose

on his own accord to become one.[1] He was called, in fact, called by God through his son Jesus Christ. As with a contemporary understanding of vocation—seen in the Latin root *vocáre*, "to call"—it is not a job one chooses or discerns, not an occupation or a profession, but a call that invites a response. Furthermore, I believe we should recognize that his relationship with Christ determined how he worked pastorally, which is why we begin with his apostolic call.

Paul's Call

The NT gives us two separate accounts of Paul's call to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. His own version found in Galatians should take precedence as a source for his self-understanding of this momentous event. But the narrative account found in Acts, which exists in three different versions (Acts 9, 22, and 26), can also be instructive. Let's look first at Paul's own description found in Galatians 1:11-24.

The Galatian Perspective

Keeping in mind that Paul wrote Galatians in a highly emotional state in order to persuade the Galatian community back to "the truth of the gospel" (2:5, 14), which they were in danger of abandoning (or indeed had abandoned, 1:6), Paul writes with force to defend his apostolic identity and his message. It was doubtless being besmirched by anonymous agitators (2:4) who were trying to get the Galatians to accept circumcision. So Paul begins his strong letter by first defending his apostolic identity and authority. He takes great pains to emphasize that his calling as an apostle was not from any human authority, neither as a source nor as a mediated call (1:1, 11-12). Instead, Paul insists that his call was divine: "[F]or I did not receive it from a human source, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation (*di'apokalypseōs*) of Jesus Christ" (1:12). After admitting his previous persecution of "the church of God" and his

[1] One scholar who acknowledges the notion of vocation in relationship to Paul in the way that I envision it is Gordon D. Fee, *Offer Yourselves to God: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Paul's Epistles* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2019), 1–21.

zeal for his ancestral Jewish traditions, he explains in more detail the nature of this call.

> But when God, who had set me apart from the womb and called (*kaléō*) me through his grace, was pleased to reveal (*apokalýpsai*) his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the gentiles, I did not confer with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before (*pro*) me, but I went away at once into Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. (1:15-17, au. trans.)

Several aspects of this passage are important to understand why this can be seen as a true vocation. First, Paul makes it clear that God did the calling. No human intervention was involved. In fact, by using the notion of "revelation" (*apokálypsis*) in both noun and verbal forms Paul is emphasizing that the experience was something mysterious and beyond human description. Whether this can properly be called a "mystical" experience is debated, but its super-human origin is most important. Moreover, attributing it to grace (*cháris*) reinforces the divine initiative. Grace is Paul's vital concept of God's gracious force in the world, the means through which his ministry can be successful.

Second, the content of this revelation was a person, God's own Son, Jesus Christ. From the very beginning of Paul's ministry, Jesus Christ was central. Thus, Christology figures prominently in his entire theological outlook; we can rightly call it Christocentric. His letters are filled with christological affirmation and insight, but this does not mean that this is the only theological perspective to keep in mind, especially as regards ministry. Third, the vocabulary of being "set apart" (also Rom 1:1) and "called from the womb" especially recalls two important prophetic calls from the OT, Isaiah (Isa 49:1) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:4). The language thus fleshes out Paul's vocation with prophetic tones, something he also makes evident in his acknowledgment of the gift of prophecy among the charisms of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:10, 27) and the importance of the prophetic ministry for building up the church (1 Cor 14:5, 29-33). Given the importance of the prophets in the OT, we should not be surprised that Paul would recognize prophecy as an essential gift to the church. In fact, it is second on the list of highlighted leadership roles, after that of apostle (1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). Yet, as with

the vocabulary of "pastor," Paul never describes himself as a prophet, as such. Nonetheless, his preaching and authoritative teaching would indicate that he acted as a prophet, namely as a spokesperson for God. This call is intimately tied to the task of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ, as Galatians makes clear (1:6-9, 11). His call is nothing less than to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Gal 1:16). The frequency of the verb "call," whether of himself (e.g., Rom 1:1; 1 Cor 1:1) or of his communities (Rom 1:6-7; 1 Cor 1:2, 24, 26; Gal 5:8; Phil 3:14; 1 Thess 2:12; 2 Thess 1:11; Eph 1:18; etc.), indicates the vocational nature of this Christ-following identity. The very word *church* (*ekklēsía*) is related to the word for "those called" (*klētois*; Rom 8:28). They are the community of the elect, the ones God has chosen.

We should also recall that this notion of the call is not Paul's invention. The entire history of salvation recounted in the OT is based upon God's call to Israel. YHWH is a God of election.[2] God chooses a people and calls them into being. Abraham, for instance, Paul's great model of faith, is called by God from Haran and simply follows the command without question (Gen 12:1-4). Paul seizes on this detail to emphasize Abraham's trust in God's word. This unquestioning trust is what made Abraham "righteous" in God's eyes (Gal 3:6; Rom 4:3; cf. Gen 15:6).

One other detail of Paul's vocational story is worth noting. Since a true vocation cannot be auto-declared—in the same way true prophets do not choose their work but are called to it—so Paul did not merely take up his ministry entirely by himself. He received a divine call, which meant he was beholden to no human being for it. Yet he also recognized that his was not the first call. There were others before him (*pro*, 1:17) whom he also recognized as "reputed" leaders of the church (2:6; au. trans.). Even if it took time, somewhat early in his apostolic mission Paul went to Jerusalem to visit them and the mother church and to solicit their approval for his outreach to the Gentiles. He claims he received such an agreement (2:1-10). This is a tacit acknowledgment that leaders in the church play a role in discerning in some fashion the authenticity of a vocation. The only thing these earlier authorities demanded of Paul was

[2] YHWH is a customary way of designating the God of the OT whose sacred name was revealed to Moses (Exod 3:13-14) and was not to be pronounced (Lev 24:16).

the collection for the poor of the mother church (2:10), something that was a preoccupation of Paul for his entire ministry.[3]

Some might be disappointed that Paul does not give us a more detailed description of what this "revelation" of Jesus Christ was really like. It is veiled terminology. Was it primarily visual, aural, something in a trance, or what we might call mystical? Paul does not say. For a different perspective, we have to go to the Acts of the Apostles.

The Perspective of Acts

Virtually everyone is familiar with Paul's so-called conversion as recounted in Acts, even though, on the basis of Galatians, we might more properly describe this event as a prophetic call and commission. Luke[4] offers a more colorful and detailed narrative. That it is the quintessential model of conversion for Luke is evident in the fact that it is narrated three times in his book, each with slightly different details.[5] The controlling third-person narrative is Acts 9:1-19. The other two versions show Paul describing the same story from a first-person perspective to two different audiences, Jewish (22:3-16) and Gentile (26:2-18). For Luke, the dramatic story spotlights Paul for the second half of his narrative of the birth of the church by showing him to be God's chosen instrument to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles. For our purposes, a look at the main narrative will suffice.

The backdrop of Paul's call according to Acts is his patent approval of the persecution of the church and his active participation in it (8:1-3; 9:1-2), something Paul freely admits (Gal 1:13, 23; 1 Cor 15:9; Phil 3:6).

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[3] Some scholars question whether the reference to "remember the poor" (2:10) actually refers to the collection which predominated in Paul's ministry, but I believe it is the most likely meaning.

[4] I use the convention of calling the author of Acts "Luke" since it is clear that the author is the same who wrote Luke's Gospel (cf. Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5). I make no judgment about the true identity of this person and whether he is to be identified with Luke, the physician and sometime companion of Paul (Col 2:14; 2 Tim 4:11; Phlm 24).

[5] For rhetorical aspects of these repetitive stories, see Ronald D. Witherup, "'Functional Redundancy' in the Acts of the Apostles: A Case Study," *JSNT* 48 (1992): 67–86.

Consistent with Paul's description of his call in Galatians, Acts localizes the story near Damascus and records it as an extraordinary divine intervention. Unlike Paul's own account, Acts tells the narrative in detail. On his way to Damascus to wreak havoc on the church, a light from the sky suddenly surrounds Paul. He falls to the ground and hears a voice, using his Jewish name: "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (9:4), the same question found in all three versions of the story. To Paul's pleas for the speaker's identity, the answer comes back: "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (9:5; also 22:8; 26:15). When Paul arises, he is blind and has to be led by hand to Damascus. The Lord then appears to another disciple in Damascus, Ananias, and instructs him to go to Paul. Understandably, Ananias is afraid because of Paul's fierce reputation as a persecutor (see Gal 1:23). God assuages him with an important explanation:

> But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." (9:15-16)

Ananias does indeed go to Paul, who is filled with the Holy Spirit, regains his sight, is baptized, and stays in Damascus some days, already beginning to preach the gospel (9:17-22).

This is a dramatic story, which some artists through history have captured on canvas. It is one of the most impressive conversion stories in the Bible. But what does it tell us about Paul's vocation?

Nothing in the story contradicts Paul's much less glamorous and more shrouded account in Galatians of his call by the Lord. It serves Luke's purpose very well, however, because Paul and his colleagues become the focus of evangelization throughout the entire Mediterranean basin by virtue of at least three missionary journeys (13:4–14:28; 15:36–18:22; 18:23–21:16). While these are likely artistically designed by Luke, they roughly correspond to Paul's missionary activity as set forth in the letters. The fourth and final journey (27:1–28:14) leads to Paul's captivity in Rome where, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who accompanies every step of the birth of the church in Acts, Paul preaches the gospel boldly (*parrhēsía*), even while under house arrest

(28:30-31). Nothing, it seems, can dim the light of the gospel. Acts never records Paul's martyrdom, but the open-ended way that the book of Acts ends might indicate the spread of the gospel continued inexorably. Paul's call to preach the good news bore fruit, despite the threat of persecution.

In line with the information from Galatians above, we should note here that Acts acknowledges that Paul and his colleagues consulted the leaders in Jerusalem, in particular Simon Peter and James the brother of the Lord, at the "council of Jerusalem" (15:1-29). While it can be challenging to reconcile some of the differences between Acts 15 and Galatians 2 on this question, we can say that Paul's identity as Apostle to the Gentiles was confirmed. In other words, his divinely ordered vocation was reinforced and backed with some external, human authority, although its origin was always divine.

Paul's Vocation: Apostle, Evangelizer, Missionary

Paul is known for many activities: apostle, evangelizer, missionary, prophet, preacher, teacher, healer, letter-writer, and founder of churches. Before we consider any of these titles or activities, we need to examine their deeper foundation. Paul himself would draw attention to it. The first and foremost result of his call was a relationship with Jesus Christ. Without this relationship, the call would be empty.

Several Pauline passages indicate how we should characterize this relationship. Returning to the autobiographical description of his call in Galatians, we recall that Paul acknowledges God's revelation of his Son to him by grace (1:15-16). He expounds on this revelation in a most personal way once he broaches the topic of justification by faith. His most startling claim is how dramatic and personal this transformation has been in his life.

> I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Gal 2:19b-20)[6]

[6] The NRSVue translates the phrase "by the faith *of* the Son of God," thus preferring the subjective genitive of the Greek phrase. This emphasizes Christ's own

Paul does not explicitly reference his own baptism in this passage (see Acts 9:18; 22:16), but that is likely in the background. Elsewhere, Paul speaks of baptism as sharing in Christ's death and being buried with him (Rom 6:3-4), thus, a crucifixion of sorts (Rom 6:6), but one that leads to new life (Rom 6:4). This transformation, however, is like a full participation in Christ's life. Even now, in his earthly existence, Christ is the one who lives in him. Paul's participation in the resurrection has already begun by virtue of this new life. The relationship is unbreakable because of Christ's own fidelity (Rom 8:28-31).

This highly personal attitude is found also in Philippians. Contrasting his former life as a law-observant Pharisee to his new life of faith, Paul proclaims:

> Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish (*skýbala*), in order that I may gain Christ . . . (Phil 3:7-8)

He goes on to express his willingness to share Christ's sufferings so that he can also share his resurrection (Phil 3:10-11). Paul's use of the strong Greek word *skýbala* heightens the contrast between his former way of life and his new baptismal life as a Christ-follower.[7]

Yet another passage illustrates Paul's extraordinary relationship to Christ. In Rom 1:1, recalling his identity as an apostle called by God and set apart for proclaiming the gospel, he calls himself first "a slave (*doulos*) of Christ (au. trans.)." The Greek word *doulos* can also mean "servant" (NRSVue) but here it surely means slave in an ironic sense (also Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1; Col 4:12; Titus 1:1). Normally, slavery is a bad thing. In Paul's Greco-Roman world, literal slavery was simply a given. Slaves ensured

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fidelity rather than the believer's faith *in* Christ as the Son of God. Grammatically, both meanings are possible. Here, I think the objective reading is best, though Paul expresses both ideas in different contexts.

[7] Although the term "Christ-follower" is awkward, I use it because "Christian" is anachronistic (despite Acts 11:26) and mistakenly means a change of religion. Paul remained a Jew, albeit one who believed Jesus was the Messiah whose message was equally for Gentiles as well as Jews.

the proper functioning of the social network and the Roman economy. The notion of slavery could also be used metaphorically. In particular for Paul, it is an aspect of the human condition to be a slave to sin and all sorts of wrongdoing, requiring salvation (Rom 8:21; Gal 4:7, 9). Given that Paul emphasizes freedom and equality among the baptized (Gal 5:1; Rom 8:21; Phlm 15-16), his use of the expression is meant to indicate just how solid is his relationship to Christ. He has paradoxically become a slave of Christ. He is like an obedient, humble slave who is willing to do whatever the master requires. It is an attitude of humility and utter commitment to someone greater than himself. Accepting this deep relationship means subordinating one's own desires to Christ's.

In one passage Paul employs a word that reveals another aspect of his relationship with Christ in ministry. He and his colleagues who live in Christ have become "ambassadors" (*presbeúomen*) for Christ's ministry of reconciliation in the world (2 Cor 5:20). In the context of an imprisonment for the sake of the gospel, Paul calls himself an "ambassador in chains" (Eph 6:20). An ambassador is a formal representative of an authority of some sort. In the ancient world, ambassadors usually had the authority to speak and act in the name of the one who authorized them. Paul sees himself and his fellow ministers as true ambassadors. They were envoys or representatives with derivative authority. Paul explains that the transformation that has happened to him in Christ meant that a strictly human dimension was no longer the controlling one. Being incorporated "into Christ" gave them a new identity. They became a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:16-20).

Now that we have explained the importance of the personal relationship with Christ as the basis of this vocation, we can now turn to several other essential terms that flesh out Paul's vocation.

Apostle

There is no question that "apostle" is Paul's primary title for himself, despite the fact that he was not called by Jesus of Nazareth during the latter's earthly ministry. It is the most frequent label he uses of himself in the greetings of his letters (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Rom 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1). The occurrence of the word in 1 Thessalonians (2:7, "apostles of Christ")—the earliest of

CHAPTER THREE

Pauline Ministry in the Light of the Gospel

"[B]ecause of the grace given me by God to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God . . ." (Rom 15:15b-16)

Now that we have discussed the nature of the church in Paul, we can turn to the question of pastoral ministry. We should at the outset admit that a more primary notion, perhaps, could be "mission." As an apostle of the risen Lord, Paul was clearly sent on a mission. He was tasked with carrying the gospel far and wide, to both Jew and Gentile (Rom 1:16), although primarily to evangelize among the Gentiles. His mission was to announce the salvation that God has provided a sinful world—both Jew and Gentile—in the person of Jesus Christ, who by his death and resurrection has achieved reconciliation and invited Christ-followers to share in this mission for the sake of all (2 Cor 5:19-20). The mission involved evangelizing, preaching, teaching, and establishing faith communities. Paul did all this around the ancient Mediterranean basin in the context of the Roman Empire and its Greco-Roman social setting. In addition, there was an urgency to Paul's mission. This stems from his eschatological outlook that the end times were near and that the

gospel must be spread as quickly as possible to prepare for the Lord's coming in judgment. No time could be lost. Utilizing familiar eschatological imagery associated with "the day of the Lord" (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Cor 1:14; cf. 1 Cor 1:8; Phil 1:10; also Isa 13:6; Amos 5:18; Mal 4:5), Paul engaged in ministry with firm purpose and one eye on the goal: ultimate salvation in heaven (Phil 3:20) while living out the righteousness (*dikaiosýnē*) bestowed on us by God here in the present (2 Cor 5:21–6:2).

Mission, however, is not a solitary concept. Accomplishing the mission required actions, resources, and especially people. Mission is achieved through ministry. That is why we will look in detail at the main elements of Paul's ministry evident in his letters.

Vocabulary

A helpful tool to begin with is the extensive vocabulary that Paul utilized in his ministry. There is a series of terms that provide an overview of just how extensive a network Paul had at his disposal for the dissemination of the light of the gospel. These are set forth in the following chart, after which I will offer some commentary. Notice that a few terms do not contain a definition of the concept, as their meaning is self-evident.

Terminology for Ministry in Paul's Letters			
English Term	**Greek Term**	**Concept**	**Select Scriptures**
apostle	*apóstolos*	one who is sent	1 Cor 12:28; Gal 1:1 (also Eph 4:11)
prophet	*prophētēs*	one who speaks God's word	1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11
teacher	*didáskalos*	one who teaches or formally instructs	1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11
evangelist	*euaggelístēs*	one who speaks or announces good news	Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 4:5; Acts 21:8

herald/preacher	*kēryx*	one who proclaims	1 Tim 2:7; 2 Tim 1:11
pastor/shepherd	*poimēn*	one who tends the flock	Eph 4:11
bishop/overseer	*epískopos*	one who oversees order and organizes	Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2
presbyter/elder	*presbýteros*	elder	1 Tim 5:17-22; Titus 1:5-6
deacon/servant	*diákonos*	one who serves	Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:8-13; Col 4:7
minister	*leitourgos*	one who does public service	Rom 15:16; Phil 2:25
coworker	*synérgos*	one who works with another or others	Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25; 4:3; Col 4:11; 1 Thess 3:2; Phlm 1, 24 (cf. 1 Cor 3:9)
partner	*koinōnos*	one who takes part	2 Cor 8:23; Phlm 17
slave (of Christ)	*doulos (christou)*	-------	Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10
fellow slave	*syndoulos*	-------	Col 1:7; 4:7
fellow soldier	*systratiōtēs*	-------	Phil 2:25; Phlm 2 (cf. 2 Tim 2:3)
fellow prisoner	*synaichmalōtos*	-------	Rom 16:7; Col 4:10; Phlm 23
workers in the Lord	*tas kopiōsas en kyriō*	from the verb "to labor, become tired, or trouble oneself"	Rom 16:12 (cf. Rom 16:6; Phil 2:16; 1 Thess 5:12)
brother/sister	*adelphós/ adelphē*	figuratively (usually)	Col 4:7
father	*patēr*	figuratively (usually)	1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:11; Phlm 10

nursing mother	*trophós*	figuratively	1 Thess 2:7
widow	*chēra*	-------	1 Tim 5:3-10
ambassador	*presbeuō*	represent an authority in person	2 Cor 5:20

Several observations about this list are necessary. First of all, despite frequent assertions that Pauline ministry was egalitarian, there is, in fact, a certain hierarchy of ministerial roles. At the top of the list is "apostle." There is no question that this is Paul's primary category for engaging in ministry. It takes precedence over other roles. This is primarily owing to his apostolic call, his vocation. As we noted above in chapter 1, Paul was *called* to be an apostle. We also note that it is the most frequent label he uses of himself in the greetings of his letters (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Rom 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1). An even more striking fact is that "apostle" occurs in the first place in the list of various ministries (charisms, which we will discuss below). Paul explicitly draws attention to a list of roles in the church that come directly from God (through the Holy Spirit):

> Some people God has placed in the church to be, first (*prōton*), apostles; second, prophets; third, teachers; then, mighty deeds; then, gifts of healing, assistance, leadership (*kybernēseis*), and varieties of tongues. (1 Cor 12:28 au. trans.)

The explicit reference to "first" in the position of apostles is, I believe, intentional. They are preeminent because they were directly called and sent on mission by Jesus Christ. Paul is aware, of course, that Jesus of Nazareth called some apostles during his earthly ministry. He acknowledges this special group as "the twelve" (1 Cor 15:5; cf. Matt 10:2). Paul, however, does not see his own apostleship as secondary in importance even though he was called later by the risen Lord (Gal 1:1; 12; 1 Cor 15:10-11). It is also interesting to see a similar list in Ephesians wherein the first two categories are in the same order, apostles and prophets, appointed by Christ.

> He himself granted that some are apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors (*poiménas*) and teachers (*didaskálous*), to

> equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ . . . (Eph 4:11-12)

In this second list, we see the addition of evangelists, pastors, and teachers, all roles that were paramount in the Pauline churches. This is the only passage in Paul that uses the word "pastor" (*poimēn*), the standard word for shepherd. It could be employed literally for those who took care of sheep or figuratively for those who watched over groups of people. Here it is joined by a conjunction ("and") to the word "teacher" (*didáskalos*), which may indicate that pastoring and teaching go together. What is noteworthy is that the first two categories—apostle and prophet—retain their place in the list. There is a certain preeminence to these roles in Pauline ministry.

Another comment concerns the mention of "leadership" in the passage from 1 Corinthians. The word is in the plural and could mean "offices of leadership," though it is often translated by "administration" (NABRE). The Greek word refers to one who steers a ship through the water; analogously Paul uses it to explain the role of skillfully guiding a community. This demonstrates that Paul is not unaware of the need for good administration and leadership in the offices of ministry; ministry is not all exercised only in the more dramatic or inspiring roles.

We should also note the presence of several words that begin with a form of the Greek preposition *syn* ("with"): *synergos, syndoulos, systratiōtēs, synaichmalōtos.* This is the equivalent of English "co-" as in coworker. Paul's rather frequent use of words that begin with this preposition indicates that he conceives of ministry as cooperative. He is not alone in ministry. He has colleagues—many of them (see below)—and he calls out their participation in ministry by explicitly drawing attention to their sharing in it, even to the point of sometimes suffering as fellow "slaves" of Christ or "fellow soldiers" fighting evil.

Another observation is that some of the terms are used metaphorically (e.g., nursing mother; fellow slave).[1] Certain terms like "brother" or "sister" are not usually to be taken literally as referring to a blood sibling. Paul regularly uses the vocabulary of family or kinship for Christ-followers because he views the church, the body of Christ, as

[1] See Raymond F. Collins, *The Power of Images in Paul* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008).

a new family, "the family of faith" (Gal 6:10; cf. Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 5:8). As in some modern cultures today, using fraternal language is a way of identifying like-minded individuals or members of a wider community who are perceived as fellow companions.

Three of the designations in this list require special comment, namely bishop, priest, and deacon. Today these have come to signify explicitly the threefold ordained ministries of the church. I believe the seeds of this ordained ministry—really all about church order—can be found in the Pauline corpus, for instance in the expression of the "laying on of hands" (1 Tim 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Acts 6:6). We must be cautious in this regard, however, for three reasons. One is that the language sometimes refers to healing (Acts 28:8), the imparting of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18; 19:6), or sending someone off on mission (Acts 13:3). These do not relate to "holy orders." Second, any reference to ordination in this period of church history is anachronistic; it only developed much later. Third, there is considerable scholarly debate on what the three Greek terms *epískopoi*, *presbýteroi*, and *diákonoi* reference.[2] Are they describing functions (as in overseer, elder, servant) or roles (bishop, presbyter, deacon)? Interestingly, when writing to the Philippians, Paul greets the *epískopoi* and *diákonoi* (Phil 1:1), but there is no mention of *presbýteroi*. Translations illustrate these differences. The NRSVue uses "bishops and deacons," while the NABRE uses "overseers and ministers."

The root idea of *epískopos* is indeed an overseer, someone charged with oversight in administration. A *diákonos*, on the other hand, is a servant or minister. Paul uses the term *diakonía* generically to represent ministry in general (1 Cor 3:5; 2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:23). The Pastoral Letters is where the terminology is used of all three categories, but there is a dispute about how to interpret them. Are the bishops and presbyters actually one ministry or two? At one point Paul discusses overseers and servants (1 Tim 3:1-13) and then brings in elders separately only later (1 Tim 5:17-23). In the latter passage Paul offers an important caution: "Do not lay hands too readily on anyone" (v. 22, NABRE; "Do not ordain

[2] Still reliable and accessible is Raymond E. Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2009; orig. 1970), but see also John N. Collins, *Diakonia: Reinterpreting the Ancient Sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

anyone hastily," NRSVue). Part of the problem is that the NT is not consistent. For our purposes, we can say that these ministries laid the foundation for later church structures but were active in Paul's day in a nascent way to help organize and sustain the church as a community in need of organization.

In Paul's day, since he was engaged as a missionary in itinerant evangelization, there was a necessity to ensure that someone would care for the community while he and his colleagues were off disseminating the gospel message. Leadership was necessary. Some of it came from natives already present in the community (e.g., Apollos and Stephanas in Corinth; Epaphroditus in Philippi; Epaphras in Colossae), and some of it would be appointed from among trusted colleagues (Timothy, Titus). I believe Paul's principal concern as a founder of believing communities was that they not be orphaned. He appointed certain leaders to ensure stability but also stayed in touch with them. The catalogues of duties evident in later Pauline letters indicate that there was concern for quality and discipline; ministry was not merely haphazard (1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5–2:15). Moreover, since Christ was the true head of the church (Eph 4:15; 5:23), human leaders were primarily commissioned to act in his stead and to be of service to the community of faith. That is why the notion of stewardship is also crucial in the Pauline churches. As Paul says specifically, "Think of us in this way: as servants (*hypērétas*) of Christ and stewards (*oikonómous*) of God's mysteries" (1 Cor 4:1). This is a beautiful description of what ministry entails. The former concept emphasizes assisting or helping Christ, while the latter connotes the duties of a householder held responsible for administering or managing an estate. These are entrusted duties, not entitlements.

Evangelization

How did Paul go about his mission of spreading the gospel? There are different ways that this question can be parsed, but I have chosen to answer it through five primary categories: preaching, teaching, prophesying, healing, and pastoring. All of these are actions that Paul employed when traveling all over the ancient Mediterranean basin proclaiming Jesus Christ and founding communities of Christ-followers. All are involved in spreading the light of the gospel.

Preaching

Ancient Greek had various words to describe what we generically call "preaching." Paul most frequently uses the verb "evangelize" (*euangelízō*) to describe his task. It is used fifty-four times in his letters and basically means "to proclaim the gospel" (Rom 1:15; 10:15; 15:20; 1 Cor 15:1; 2 Cor 10:16; Eph 3:8; etc.). Its inspiration comes from the Greek translation (LXX) of the book of Isaiah, where the verb *euangelízomai* is used (Isa 52:7; cited by Paul in Rom 10:15). It is tied intimately to the "gospel" or the "good news" (*euangélion*). As stated above, the "gospel" is Paul's shorthand designation for the message of salvation embodied in the Christ event, especially the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. The "truth of the gospel" could not be compromised (Gal 2:5, 14). In fact, the gospel was a singular reality to which nothing could compare (Gal 1:8-9). It was this announcement that Paul received when God revealed his Son to him somewhere near Damascus. It is his primary task (1 Cor 1:17; 9:16).[3]

Another word group is also used for preaching: *kēryssō*, *kērygma*, and *kēryx*. Although Paul only refers to himself once as a "preacher" (1 Tim 2:7) and only rarely uses the word *kērygma*—the content of the early Christian proclamation (Rom 16:25; 1 Cor 1:21; 2:4; 15:14; Titus 1:3)—there is no question that he announced the good news by word. On one occasion he makes it very clear that his preaching is all about his gospel message (Rom 16:25, where *kērygma* and *euangélion* appear together as "my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ"). We must remain clear, however, that expressions like "my gospel" (also Rom 2:16 and 2 Tim 2:8) or "our gospel" (2 Cor 4:3) do not mean that Paul possesses it or created it. He is but the proclaimer of a message with which he has been entrusted (1 Cor 9:16-17).

We might wonder how effective a preacher Paul was. There is evidence that he had some training in Greco-Roman rhetoric because of certain rhetorical conventions he uses in his letters (such as the diatribe—creating an artificial dialogue partner). He also may have had some training in rabbinic methods, if Acts is correct that he studied under the rabbi

[3] For a recent study of Paul's preaching, see Frank J. Matera, *Preaching from the Cross: Paul's Theology of Proclamation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025).

Gamaliel (Acts 22:3). But both in Acts and his letters, Paul's abilities as an orator might be questioned. One passage, perhaps intended humorously, describes Paul preaching on and on in a third-story room until midnight when a youth named Eutychus is overcome by sleep and falls out an open window and dies. Paul goes down, revives him, and goes back upstairs to continue preaching (the verb *homiléō*) until daybreak (Acts 20:7-12)! More seriously, Paul himself avers to criticism of his preaching while defending his apostolic ministry. He writes,

> For someone says, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." (2 Cor 10:10)

The negative adjective here refers to something strongly disdained or despised, hardly a compliment for a preacher. But we do not know the context of this criticism. The fact is that Paul seems to have been quite effective in announcing the gospel, or at least his letters, which were read aloud in community settings, have been recognized from the beginning as a most eloquent testimony to it.

Another aspect of Paul's preaching is found in the many ways he exhorts and encourages his communities. This type of preaching (*paraklēsis* and the verb *parakaléō*) is particularly found in his many sections of ethical instruction throughout his letters (Rom 15:4; 1 Thess 2:3: 2 Cor 1:6; etc.). There was a dual purpose in this approach, both to affirm and exhort, offering both encouragement and further impetus.

Teaching

A second method of evangelization concerns teaching. Paul actually places this ministry in third place in his list of important gifts to the church, just after apostleship and prophecy (1 Cor 12:28). The vocabulary is somewhat diverse, but usually the verb "teach" (*didáskō*) and the nouns "teaching" (*didachē* or *didaskalía*) are used.[4] If Paul was indeed formed in rabbinic tradition, he would have been familiar with the exalted task of teaching, but it would have been mostly in connection

[4] In later church tradition, *dídachē* became a technical term for authentic Christian teaching.

CHAPTER NINE

Romans: Theology and Ministry in the Light of the Gospel

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, the gospel concerning his Son . . . ." (Rom 1:1-3)

The letter to the Romans is unquestionably Paul's monumental epistolary achievement. Not only is it his longest letter (ca. 7,100 words in Greek), but it is clearly his most theological.[1] Ever since Martin Luther's rediscovery of its teaching of justification by faith in the sixteenth century, Romans has loomed large in any discussions of Pauline theology. But to emphasize its theological aspects, important though they are, does not mean it is not at the same time a *pastoral* letter.[2] Like all of

[1] Differences in manuscript tradition and textual variants make a definitive word count only approximate. But for comparison, the average letter in the ancient world at that time (think Cicero or Seneca), was only 300 to 1,000 words. All of Paul's letters, with the exception of Philemon (ca. 330 words), were rather long.

[2] A century ago, a well-known German scholar warned that Romans should not be seen as a compendium of all Paul's theology. See Adolf Deissmann, *Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), 23.

Paul's letters, Romans was situational. It was written to a specific community, at a specific time, for specific reasons; there are consequently pastoral dimensions to Romans that can be discerned. What concerns us here in this chapter, however, is how theology and pastoral practice intersect in this most sophisticated and "weighty" of Paul's letters (see 2 Cor 10:10).

Background

Rome was the capital of the Roman Empire, a city of more than a million people in Paul's day. Paul did not found the community of Christ-followers in Rome. He did, however, have a fair acquaintance of any number of Roman believers because he had encountered them on his travels. In particular, after the expulsion of the Jews (including the sect of Christ-followers) by Emperor Claudius in about 49 CE, many of them made their way across the Adriatic Sea and landed in Corinth. Among them were Paul's eventual colleagues, Prisca and Aquila, whom we have described before (see Acts 18:1-3; Rom 16:3). Chapter 16 of Romans contains an unusually long list of greetings, which sometimes provokes the question of how Paul could have known so many Roman believers, having never been there before.[3] I think just such a scenario as outlined above can explain that Paul could have had much more contact than we might presume. Since he spent a considerable length of time in Corinth, it would have given him the opportunity to be acquainted even with passersby who were on their way elsewhere after the expulsion from Rome. Be that as it may, Paul sends a very detailed letter to the Roman community, which now is considered the centerpiece of his theological outlook.

Why would Paul write this letter to a Gentile community he did not found? Unlike other letters to communities of which he was the founder, there are no opponents or agitators to correct. Romans is not, therefore, an apologetic or combative letter. Several reasons for it are evident. First of all, Paul claims he had always wanted to come visit them but was prevented (1:13). Now that he is able, he proposes a second reason. He wants

[3] The theory that this chapter in the letter originates with a different letter and got attached to Romans is not very probable, despite the fact that Romans 15:30-33 seems to be a letter's ending.

to share his view of the gospel message with this obviously important community, and then to hear from them about their own perspective. He speaks of mutual encouragement in this regard (1:12). Then he adds an observation about his self-perception as an evangelizer:

> Both to Greeks and barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish, I am under an obligation; hence my eagerness to proclaim the gospel to you also who are in Rome. (1:14-15 au. trans.)[4]

The sense of compulsion Paul felt to proclaim the gospel wherever he could is evident in this sentiment (also 1 Cor 9:9). While normally Paul's principle was to preach in virgin territories not yet evangelized (15:20), he sometimes did visit other regions. The visit to Rome, in fact, is part of a larger plan. Paul expresses his fervent desire to proclaim the gospel in Spain, one of the furthest outposts of the empire (15:24, 28). So this is another reason to visit. Rome would provide a convenient launching pad for a western mission.

Paul's plans, however, had a little wrinkle. He desired to go to Jerusalem first in order to deliver safely the collection that had been so much a part of his missionary efforts (15:25-28). He doubtless knew that the journey could be hazardous, but his conviction about the collection for the poor in the mother church, to which many of his communities had contributed, was such that he felt compelled to undertake this trip. He expresses utter confidence in Christ's blessing for this mission (15:29). Only from Acts do we get an account of what actually transpired (Acts 21–28). Paul's martyrdom, of course, is nowhere recorded. It is likely that he was beheaded in Rome in the mid- to late 60s while Nero was the emperor.

Fortunately, Paul's letter to the Romans has left a lasting legacy about his witness to the light of the gospel. It was likely composed in Corinth between 56 and 58 CE. An interesting feature of Romans is that it makes the only reference to how Paul wrote his letters. He dictated them to a scribe (*amanuensis*), who reveals himself in a friendly manner: "I

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[4] The dualism of "Greeks and barbarians" was a standard division at the time. Since the conquest of Alexander the Great (d. 333 BCE), however, Koinē Greek had become the main language of the empire. Paul writes his letters in this form of Greek.

Tertius, the writer of this letter, greet you in the Lord" (16:22). This does not mean that he composed the letter himself; rather he took dictation. At times, though, Paul appends his own signature drawing attention to his own unskilled ability with the quill (1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17). This may have helped authenticate the letter or perhaps ensure that its content met with Paul's approval.

Pastoral Situation

Although modern interpreters tend to focus on the self-evident doctrinal content of this letter, there are also indicators of important pastoral dimensions. Three stand out. One is that Paul writes in preparation for his upcoming visit to Rome so that he can solicit their support—financial and otherwise—for the collection for the "saints" in Jerusalem and for his mission to Spain. Second, Paul wants to clarify elements of his theology because he has apparently been informed that some of the Romans have an incomplete understanding of his gospel of justification by faith. Paul writes to set the record straight. A third factor concerns the tensions in this mixed community between Jewish and Gentile Christ-followers. Some of the Jewish faithful seem threatened that they have been supplanted by the Gentiles. This has raised questions about their status, which forces Paul himself to think seriously about his own countrymen.

Outline

We can outline the letter as follows:

1:1-7	Greeting
1:8-15	Thanksgiving
1:16–11:36	Body
1:16–3:20	The Universal Bondage to Sin
3:21–5:21	Justification by Faith and Salvation
6:1–7:1	Baptism and Freedom
8:1-39	The Holy Spirit
9:1–11:36	The Problem of Israel and the Gentiles
12:1–15:33	Ethical instruction
16:1-27	Closing

We should point out that despite its considerable length and theologically profound content, Romans is a true letter. It is not a theological treatise dressed up to look like one. Also, although many topics treated throughout the letter seem to be in serial fashion, they constitute a unity. Romans presents a sustained argument in favor of the gospel of Jesus Christ as Paul has come to know and preach it. This is Paul's most detailed treatment of his gospel, which is a gospel of the new life that comes from Christ (1:17; 2:7; 5:17; etc.).[5] This life is connected to faith (*pistis*), both the faithfulness of Christ in fulfilling his Father's will and the faith of believers who exercise "obedience" to faith in Christ (1:5; 15:18; 16:26).

Paul's Response to the Pastoral Situation

Given the length and complexity of Romans, like the Corinthian correspondence, I have had to choose carefully a limited number of examples of how pastoral practice and theology interconnect. There are five examples: Paul's personal story, justification by faith, ethics, the relations between Gentiles and Jews, and the essential role of the Holy Spirit.

Paul's Personal Story

We have already seen how the outline of Paul's letters generally followed well-established Greco-Roman models, with some modifications. But the component parts are not mere casual imitations. Even rather simple features, like the greeting or thanksgiving, have more substance to them than following a standard formula. The greeting in Romans (1:1-7) is instructive in this regard. Unlike all the other non-disputed letters, which name co-senders, Romans mentions only himself (1:1).[6]

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[5] The vocabulary of life (the noun *zoē* and the verb *záō*) is used nearly forty times throughout the letter. See Michael J. Gorman, *Romans: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2022), 36–37.

[6] See 1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; Phlm 1:1. In her recent commentary on Romans, Beverly Roberts Gaventa draws attention to Paul's self-description in this greeting as likely underlining his authority. See Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *Romans: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2024), 24–25. The Pastoral Letters understandably list Paul as the only sender, since he is basically mentoring his younger colleagues.

This may be to underline his own authority and to avoid seeming to rely on other support. He comes to Rome freely on his own accord, in part to know the community better and in part to continue his westward evangelization.

Paul immediately uses an identifying marker by calling himself a "slave (*doulos*) of Christ Jesus" (1:1). Although the word can mean "servant" (NRSVue), that is unlikely Paul's meaning here. He uses the same term of Christ humbling himself to this lowly status (Phil 2:7). He also uses it to contrast slaves with free persons (Gal 3:28; Col 3:11). If he is a slave of Christ, then he is not obedient to anyone else (6:6; 1 Cor 7:22-23). He further employs the term for some of his coworkers (Phil 1:1). What is the import of such terminology? It is a theological paradox that emphasizes just how bound to Christ Jesus Paul and all the baptized are. They submit to Christ as humble slaves. Pastorally, though, in the context of Romans, it would also evoke the image of the slave markets that provided the workforce needed to maintain the empire. From a believer's point of view, being a "slave" of Christ is the most freeing of all obligations. Paul even explains this in a passage that refers to being "slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification" (6:16-19), employing the word metaphorically with all its force. Indeed, in the greeting he reinforces the Romans' identity as being "called to be saints" (1:7), a reference not only to their ultimate destiny but to their baptismal identity here and now.

Two more features of this greeting are noteworthy. First, Paul mentions that Christ's coming was "promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures" (1:2). This phrase not only prepares for the many quotations from Scripture that will be included in the letter but alludes to the expansive explanation of what God has done in Christ Jesus that Paul will present throughout the entire letter. At its conclusion, Paul explains that what he has been expounding is nothing less than the "revelation of the mystery (*mystērion*) that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the gentiles . . . to bring about the obedience of faith" (16:25c-26). It is a kind of master plan, an expansive view of God's plan for the universe, foretold in the Scriptures and now evident in the gospel of Jesus Christ, which has broad implications for the Romans situated in the capital city. In Rome, the emperor was lauded as "Lord,"

a deity, worthy of all honor and glory and obedience. Also, in Roman society, concepts like faithfulness, freedom, piety, justice, and the like expressed values important to the empire. But the gospel proposes a different vision. The emperor is not in charge of the universe. He is not Lord, nor is he God, nor a Savior. Nor is the Roman Empire a permanent kingdom; God's kingdom is. Other concepts also have a different meaning than the Romans understood.[7] Paul, of course, was not writing the letter explicitly to oppose Roman authority. The gospel message, however, inevitably sets up some opposition that could pose problems for the community in the secular arena. Here again theology and pastoral implications come together.

The second added feature is Paul's explicit explanation of one of the reasons for his upcoming visit to Rome. Although he wants to "share with you some spiritual gift that you may be strengthened" (1:11), he also says in the same breath that he desires that both parties profit from a mutual sharing of one another's faith (1:12). Here we see Paul the pastor both desiring actively to impart what he knows of the faith and also desirous to learn from fellow believers their own perspective.

Justification by Faith

Justification would seemingly not be a candidate for my project of demonstrating the intertwining of theology and praxis in Paul's letters. It is, after all, one of the preeminent theological doctrines in the NT. In particular for most Protestants, it is the quintessential Pauline insight into what God has done in Christ Jesus.[8] Even such a profound and all-encompassing notion as justification developed in the context of Paul tackling practical pastoral matters.

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[7] This approach to Paul is a more recent methodology of interpretation called "empire criticism." For an introduction and critique, see Najeeb T. Haddad, *Paul and Empire Criticism: Why and How?* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2023).

[8] Although we cannot digress here on this concept, the Roman Catholic Church and several major Protestant denominations have had a remarkable common agreement on justification for more than twenty-five years, though this has not been widely disseminated among Catholics. See the 1999 document, "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," https://lutheranworld.org/resources/publication-joint-declaration-doctrine-justification.

ANNOTATED SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The following is merely a selection of useful resources in English for further reading and study. The enormous bibliography on Paul and his letters precludes more than a sampling. Commentaries and monographs are intentionally left out although some appear in the footnotes.

General References on Paul

Byrne, Brendan. *Words of Faith: A Vocabulary of Paul the Apostle*. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2023. An essential resource defining Paul's vocabulary in succinct but thorough fashion.

deSilva, David. *Archaeology and the Ministry of Paul: A Visual Guide*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025. A reliable summary of what can be known of Paul's churches archaeologically, with helpful photographs.

Harrison, James R., and L. L. Welborn, series eds. *The First Urban Churches*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015–2025. This series is part of the Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplements Series of the Society of Biblical Literature. Eight volumes thus far of scholarly articles on background to Paul's world and his urban churches, based on archaeological and epigraphic data. The volume topics include methodology; Roman Corinth; Ephesus; Roman Philippi; Colossae, Hierapolis, and Laodicea; Rome and Ostia; Thessalonica; and Galatia.

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Porter, Stanley E., series ed. *Pauline Studies* (PAST). Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2004–2019. Ten volumes thus far of up-to-date scholarly essays on many aspects of Paul and his letters, including the Pauline canon; his opponents; his theology; his world; Jewish, Greek, and Roman identities; ancient letter forms; social relations; pseudepigraphy; gnosis; and his use of Scripture.

Sampley, J. Paul, ed. *Paul in the Greco-Roman World: A Handbook*. 2nd ed. 2 vols. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016. A detailed scholarly resource on many aspects of Paul in his Greco-Roman context.

Schellenberg, Ryan S., and Heidi Wendt, eds. *T&T Clark Handbook to the Historical Paul*. London: T&T Clark, 2024. Excellent scholarly essays on what can be known of Paul from a historical perspective.

Westerholm, Stephen, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Paul*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011. A very good compendium of general articles on a wide range of topics on Paul.

Witherup, Ronald D. *101 Questions & Answers on Paul*. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2003. Basic responses in popular format to the most common questions asked about Paul and his letters.

Introductions to Paul and His Letters

Bird, Michael F. *An Anomalous Jew: Paul Among Jews, Greeks, and Romans*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016. An interesting analysis of how Paul was perceived in his time and culture.

Branick, Vincent P. *Understanding Paul and His Letters*. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2009. A good introductory textbook of Paul and all his letters from a Catholic angle.

Bruce, F. F. *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977. A classic presentation of Paul and his letters from a premier Protestant scholar.

Capes, David B., Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters, and Theology*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2017. A good basic introduction, including a glossary of important terms, written by experienced teachers.

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McRay, John. *Paul: His Life and Teaching*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. An attractive Protestant introduction to Paul and his letters with tables and photographs to supplement the text.

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Roetzel, Calvin J., and Cameron Evan Ferguson. *Paul: The Man and the Myth*. Rev. and expanded ed. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2023. A standard introduction to Paul from a responsible Protestant viewpoint.

Sanders, E. P. *Paul. The Apostle's Life, Letters, and Thought*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015. A thoughtful presentation from a scholar who helped rediscover the Jewish background of Paul.

Schnelle, Udo. *Apostle Paul: His Life and Theology*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003. A more scholarly summary but in a very readable format.

Thielman, Frank. *Paul: Apostle of Grace*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2025. Following the model of F. F. Bruce's study (1977), the author follows Paul's career based primarily on Acts.

Wright, N. T. *Paul: A Biography*. New York: HarperOne, 2018. A popular presentation of Paul from one of the world's current experts, based upon his many scholarly publications.

Pastoral Aspects of Paul

Ascough, Richard S., and Charles A. Cotton. *Passionate Visionary: Leadership Lessons from the Apostle Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2006. A very good exposition of Paul's leadership style, with discussion questions to promote dialogue.

Barnett, Paul. *Paul, Missionary of Jesus*. After Jesus 2. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008. A good summary of Paul's missionary activity on the basis of his letters and Acts.

Best, Ernest. *Paul and His Converts*. Edinburgh: Clark, 1988. An early study of several pastoral aspects of Paul's ministry, including fatherly care, exercising authority, and handling money.

Burke, Trevor J., and Brian S. Rosner, eds. *Paul as Missionary: Identity, Activity, Theology, and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2011. A fine presentation of Paul's missionary ministry.

Burroughs, Presian R., ed. *Practicing with Paul: Reflections on Paul and the Practices of Ministry in Honor of Susan G. Eastman*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018. A broad collection of scholarly essays.

Gaventa, Beverly Roberts. *Our Mother Saint Paul*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007. An innovative set of scholarly essays exposing overlooked features of feminine imagery in Paul's letters.

Gray, Allison L. *Reforming the Household of God: Paul's Models of Belonging*. New York/Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2022. A passionately argued presentation of several aspects of Paul's pastoral ministry that can serve as a model for contemporary pastoral practice.

Legrand, Lucien. *Paul and Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2023. A concise and informative summary of Paul as a missionary apostle.

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Matera, Frank J. *Preaching from the Cross: Paul's Theology of Proclamation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2025. A reliable and succinct presentation of an overlooked aspect of Paul's pastoral ministry.

McKnight, Scot. *Pastor Paul: Nurturing a Culture of Christoformity in the Church*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019. A good contribution to the attempt to bridge Paul's theology and praxis, proposing the notion of Christoformity, becoming more Christ-like, rather than cruciformity.

Plummer, Robert L., and John Mark Terry, eds. *Paul's Missionary Methods, in His Time and Ours*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012. A good presentation of Paul as a missionary, with insights for missionary ministry today.

Rosner, Brian S., Andrew S. Malone, and Trevor Burke, eds. *Paul as Pastor*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Essays from Australian scholars making good attempts to bridge Paul's theology and pastoral practice.

Schnabel, Eckhard J. *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008. An extensive analysis of Paul's missionary practices.

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INDEX OF SUBJECTS

Adam/Last Adam, 145, 147
ambassador, 21
apologia, 102–3
apostle, 13–14, 21–23, 27, 48, 57, 65, 104, 179
autobiography (of Paul), 108–11

baptism, 20, 24, 31, 34, 37, 89–91, 115, 134, 158, 179
bishops/overseers, 47, 50, 171
body, 33, 35, 62
body of Christ, 32–35, 49, 62, 92, 99, 132, 146, 158, 162–63

charism, 15, 48, 55, 62, 97, 177
Christology, 15, 63, 108, 110, 123, 156–57
church, 30–38, 40, 42–44
collection (for the saints), 17, 38–41, 97–100, 138
communion (fellowship), 38, 92, 182–83
coworkers (colleagues), 60–69, 104, 141, 158, 181
creation/new creation, 21, 32, 100, 110, 117, 144, 148, 150, 156
cross, 24, 26–27, 34, 43, 96, 110, 117, 121, 123–24, 144, 149, 157, 180
cult (*see* liturgy)

deacons, 47, 50, 66–67
Dead Sea Scrolls (Qumran), 31 n. 1, 42
diatribe, 52, 80 n. 9
doctrine, 5, 54, 95, 118 n. 14, 142, 150 n. 13, 154, 156, 169, 173

ecclesiology, 38, 157–58, 161–62
eschatology, 76–77
ethics (paraenesis), 117, 123, 145–48, 163, 165, 185
eucharist, 34–37, 43, 89–92, 96, 184
evangelization, 3, 11, 18, 23–24, 51–53, 106, 141, 177, 183 n. 4

factions, 88, 90–91, 183
faith, 19–20, 37, 68, 74, 76–78, 81–82, 96–97, 99, 109–10, 115–16, 140, 142–45
family of faith, 37, 50, 68, 84 n. 11, 90, 132
fellowship (*see* communion)

gift, 40–41, 54–56, 62–63, 99, 101, 142, 144, 179
glossolalia, 55
gospel, 2, 23, 52, 58–59, 66, 80, 85, 104, 106–8, 139–40, 149, 156–57, 161–62, 180
grace, 15, 19, 22, 39–40, 62 n. 7, 70, 108, 144, 151

head (of the body), 35, 51, 155–58, 162
healing, 50, 56
holiness (sanctification), 31–32, 70, 80, 82, 94, 184
hope, 77–79, 81, 83, 146–47, 151, 157, 179
house church, 36, 37 n. 6, 64, 67
household codes, 163–65

imitation, 32, 43, 75, 99, 125, 126–27, 172
immorality, 82, 92–94, 116
imprisonment, 4, 21, 120, 121, 122, 125, 127, 133, 158
integrity, 80, 88, 102, 177, 181–82

Josephus, 22, 31
joy, 122, 125–26, 180
justification, 111, 142–44

kenotic hymn, 122–24

lawsuits, 94–95
leadership, 41–43, 49, 51, 64, 171, 185–86
letter-writing, 57–60, 80 n. 9, 102, 177
light/darkness, 2, 78, 164, 182
liturgy (cult), 70, 128, 184
love, 32, 40, 77–78, 79, 94, 110, 116, 146–47, 164, 177, 185

mentoring, 140 n. 6, 172–73, 186
ministry, 45–71, 80, 103, 158, 168, 177–78
mission/missionary, 24–28, 106, 183
mystery, 42, 96, 141, 156, 161–62

ordination, 50, 67, 171

paraenesis (*see* ethics)
pastoral theology, 5–8
pastoring, 56–57
Philo of Alexandria, 22, 31, 116
pneumatology (*see* Spirit, Holy)
prayer, 38, 76, 77, 127, 133, 158 n. 2, 162, 180
preaching, 23, 52–53, 102, 111, 183
presbyters, 50, 169, 171
prophecy/prophesying, 15, 38, 54–56, 68–69

Qumran (*see* Dead Sea Scrolls)

reconciliation, 100–102
rejoice/rejoicing (*see* joy)
resurrection, 144, 180

sacraments, 35, 36, 89–92, 184
"saints" or "holy ones" (*see* holiness)

salvation/Savior, 2, 16, 21, 25, 30, 46, 85, 114, 144, 148–49, 157, 161–62, 175
sanctification (*see* holiness)
Scripture, 54, 111–15, 141, 173–74, 176, 184
Septuagint (LXX), 31, 42, 52, 54, 67 n. 10, 115, 123 n. 5, 143
slaves/slavery, 20–21, 111, 112, 123, 130–31, 133–34, 141
Spirit, Holy, 15, 32, 38, 54–55, 62, 70, 115–17, 149–51, 173, 177, 179
steward/stewardship, 51, 177, 181
suffering, 26–27, 33, 57, 62, 103, 104, 122, 125–26, 150–51, 172, 180

teaching, 16, 42, 53–54, 93, 113, 145, 157, 173–74
thanksgiving, 40, 58, 74–76, 107, 132
theological reflection, 188–89
tradition, 23, 25, 34, 43, 53, 54, 84, 91, 96, 122
truth, 52, 103, 107, 154, 162, 165, 171, 181

Vatican Council II, 5, 184
vocation, 13–16, 19–21, 48, 179

women, 37 n. 6, 61, 63–64, 65–69, 112, 124, 171, 181