

General Background on Paul

Because Paul's letters are important and familiar to Christians today and because the questions addressed to those letters often arise from our own contemporary context, it is sometimes easy to lose sight of the fact that Paul lived and wrote in a society far removed from ours in terms of both time and culture. Some contemporary societies may share more in common culturally or economically with Paul's society than do others, but given the vast changes that have taken place in the world since Paul's time, everywhere things are now very different. Some of Paul's writings appear to transcend the boundaries of time and culture, such as the famous passage about love in 1 Corinthians 13 (though that impression may be based on the fact that such passages are so familiar to many of us). Other parts of Paul's letters more clearly reflect views of space, the world, disease, death and so on, that seem quite different from our own and are often puzzling to us. For example, Paul suggests that sickness and death among the Corinthian congregation are a direct result of their misbehavior at the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:29-30); he insists that an immoral Christian must be "handed over to Satan" (1 Cor 5:5) and records that some believers are "baptized on behalf of the dead" (1 Cor 15:29). He has ancient views on the kinds of bodies which living creatures, planets, and stars possess (1 Cor 15:39-41). He lives in a culture in which curses are pronounced and is prepared to pronounce them himself (1 Cor 12:3; 16:22; Gal 1:8-9). We should not let our familiarity with Paul's letters blind us to the extent to which his worldview is different from ours. That is not to deny that Paul may speak powerfully to our own context, but it is to suggest that we should try to avoid "making Paul in our own image", rather than letting him be himself. (Horrell, 4-5)

While letters are not in the strict sense narratives, like the Gospels or Acts, they nevertheless create and depict narrative worlds. Every letter has a story to tell – a story with a point of view, characters, a plot, and a closure, all of which make up a world constructed by the narrator. The reader is invited to enter the narrative world and to share the point of view of the narrator. Whereas in a narrative proper the story is obvious (such as the unfolding ministry of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark), in letters the story is often deeply enmeshed in the message being communicated and a bit harder to isolate... The two letters to Corinth, for example, convey a complex story involving Paul, various groups within the Corinthian church, emissaries sent to Corinth, one or more set of opponents who challenge Paul's apostleship, several visits, and letters that have not survived. It is not easy to get agreement from scholars on the exact sequence of the events and in what order the letters were written, but a plausible retelling of the story is possible that enables one then to read the letters coherently. (Cousar, 33-35)

Scholars suggest that Paul's culture was a collectivist, group-oriented one, whereas U.S. culture is highly individualistic. Paul's worldview, values, psychology and so on belonged within that ancient Mediterranean context. Although it might be argued that these scholars paint too generalized a picture of culture at the time of Paul, their work has certainly helped to remind us that Paul was not a modern American, but lived and thought within a very different cultural, social, economic, and political context. Whoever we are, we should seek to avoid the ethnocentric and anachronistic assumption that Paul and his contemporaries were pretty much like us. (Horrell, 6)

Paul was a Jew who wrote in Greek and lived in the Roman Empire. That simple sentence indicates something about the various “worlds” that shaped Paul’s identity. But these influences cannot be neatly separated. There has been a long scholarly tradition of seeking to distinguish whether this or that feature of Paul’s theology is “Jewish” or “Hellenistic.” More recent work has, however, increasingly questioned whether such a clear distinction can be made, given the extent to which Jews, in Palestine as well as the Diaspora, had been influenced by Greek language and culture for centuries prior to Paul. (Horrell, 6)

Also important as a source for the study of Paul is the book of Acts, the first narrative history of the earliest Church, almost certainly written by the same author who wrote the Gospel of Luke. The majority of scholars dates Acts in the 80s or 90s or perhaps later still. The material from Acts, then, must be used with caution. It should not be naively accepted as some kind of pure and unbiased history but neither should its evidence be rejected or ignored. It remains an essential source for the study of Paul. (Horrell, 9-10)

We cannot expect Luke to be a historian in exactly the modern sense of the word: that would be both anachronistic and unrealistic, since Luke did not have access to the same kinds of documentation and resources as are available today, and the cultural expectations of written history then were somewhat different. Luke’s attitude to writing speeches may have been broadly similar, for example, to that expressed by the ancient historian Thucydides, who described his own approach as follows:

As to the speeches that were made by different men...it has been difficult to recall with strict accuracy the words actually spoken, both for me as regards that which I myself heard, and for those who from various other sources have brought me reports.

Therefore the speeches are given in the language in which, as it seemed to me, the several speakers would express, on the subjects under consideration, the sentiments most befitting the occasion, though at the same time I have adhered as closely as possible to the general sense of what was actually said.

(Horrell, 19-20)

In Paul we encounter a first-century Jewish thinker who while undergoing a profound disjuncture with his own religious tradition, grappled his way through to a vigorous and theologically generative reappropriation of Israel’s Scriptures. However great the tensions between his heritage and his new Christian convictions, he insistently sought to show that his proclamation of the gospel was grounded in the witness of Israel’s sacred texts. Christians accustomed to reading the “Old Testament” through the hermeneutical lens that Paul ground may find it difficult to appreciate how peculiar and scandalous many of his readings must have looked to his contemporaries. (Hays, 2)

Particularly significant among Paul’s Jewish contemporaries are the philosopher Philo of Alexandria and the historian Josephus, both of whom have left extensive writings, crucial for understanding the varieties of Judaism that existed at the time of Paul and the particular sect of Judaism to which Paul belonged. Like other Jews of his day, Paul was influenced by the wider

world in which he lived, and scholars have proposed various specific ways in which Paul's thought was shaped not only by Jewish traditions but by Cynic or Stoic philosophy, Greco-Roman rhetorical training, and so on. Texts from Roman authors, along with other artifacts, can inform us about many things relevant to understanding Paul and his letters – such as, to give just one example, the institution of slavery and the conventions by which it operated. (Horrell, 10-11)

There is a prominent theory regarding the division between Jews who spoke Hebrew or Aramaic (the Hebrews) and those who spoke Greek (the Hellenists who used the Septuagint). Persecution broke out in Jerusalem against the Hellenists. The Aramaic-speaking Jewish Christians, including "the apostles", would have been more or less unaffected by this persecution. The persecution was directed against the Hellenists (see Acts 8:1-3), at least some of whom were driven from the city. As they fled from Jerusalem, the Hellenists took the gospel with them, and shared it with those they met (Acts 8:4). Luke records Philip, for example, announcing the gospel in the city of Samaria (Acts 8:5-8), to a person he meets on his travels (Acts 8:26-39) and in various towns and cities (Acts 8:40). Some of the Hellenists shared the gospel with non-Jews, a radical step of enormous significance for the history of Christianity (Acts 11:19-20). The Hellenists therefore were of decisive significance for the spread of Christianity, both because they first formulated the gospel message in Greek, the common language of the eastern Roman Empire, and because they took their gospel from Jerusalem to other cities, and shared it with non-Jews. (Horrell, 23-24)

Paul's so-called conversion probably took place around three years after the crucifixion of Jesus. For some of the years that followed we know very little: from Paul's own account, for example, we know that he spent the three years after his conversion in Arabia and Damascus, but we know nothing definite about what exactly he did there. We do know, however, that Paul then visited Jerusalem for fifteen days (Gal 1:18), and that he was later based in the church at Antioch, acting for some years as a missionary under the commission of that church, in partnership with Barnabas (Acts 11:26-15:40). (Horrell, 27)

On three occasions the Acts of the Apostles tells the story of Paul's experience on the Damascus road (Acts 9:1-19; 22:3-16; 26:1-20). The accounts are fairly elaborate. In sharp contrast, mention of the call/conversion in Paul's letters is relatively rare, and when it does occur, the accounts are barren of the details found in Acts. Instead, his interests and intentions are thoroughly theological (or perhaps Christological). In Galatians 1:11-17 I make three brief observations about this text from Galatians. First, for Paul the initiative for the transformation comes from God. Paul apparently was content with his religious situation, including even his harassment of the church, until God abruptly intervened. The transformation of Paul was God's act, and Paul had little to do with it. Second, the substance of Paul's transforming experience is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The choice of words is significant. In 1:12 the noun "revelation" occurs, and 1:16 uses the infinitive "to reveal." Since these terms are regularly associated in the Pauline letters with the future coming of Christ, the final judgment, and the completion of salvation, they carry with them heavy freight. God's revealing of the Son not only involved a radical assault on Paul's previous life but also turned out to be a disclosure of earth-changing

proportions. Third, the revelation of Jesus Christ has a purpose: the commissioning of Paul to preach the gospel among the Gentiles. A particular understanding of mission lies at the heart of Paul's experience. (Cousar, 93-94)

Paul did clearly know some, if only a few, of the Jesus-traditions which are recorded in the Gospels. Paul appears to have known, for example, that Jesus had spoken against divorce and passes on the command of the Lord to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:10-11, cf. Matt 5:31-32; Matt 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18). The command is not presented in exactly the same wording as in the Synoptic Gospel parallels, but Paul makes the point that this teaching is not from him, but from "the Lord." Paul also apparently knew of Jesus' instruction to his missionaries not to take their own means of material support on their travels, but to depend on the support of those who welcomed them wherever they went; he refers to Jesus' instruction with his phrase "the Lord commanded" (1 Cor 9:14; cf. Matt 10:1-15; Mark 6:7-11; Luke 9:1-5; 10:1-12). Paul knew quite precisely the tradition of Jesus' words at the Last Supper, probably because these words were recited regularly at Christian meetings to celebrate the Lord's Supper, and so Paul learned them from his participation in such fellowship meals, perhaps in Antioch. (Horrell, 28-29)

Though Paul was not himself an eyewitness of Jesus' words and deeds, he came into the Christian community only a few years after Jesus' physical departure. Since all four of the canonical Gospels were written after Paul's death, could it be that Paul had no access to the tradition of Jesus' ministry and teaching, that he was in the dark about the pre-crucified Christ? This seems hardly possible since Paul acknowledges that he traveled to Jerusalem and had contacts with both Peter (Cephas) and Jesus' brother James (Gal 1:18-19). There are three occasions – all in 1 Corinthians – in which Paul makes explicit reference to sayings of "the Lord." One is the words of institution of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:23-25. The other two are 1 Cor 7:10-11 and 9:14. In the former passage, Paul addresses an unusual circumstance in the Corinthian community: some believers apparently felt marriage to be unworthy and were seeking to divorce their spouses. He calls on a command of Jesus to apply to the situation and distinguishes it in the next verse, in which he speaks without having an applicable saying of Jesus ("To the rest I say – I and not the Lord..."). The particular command Paul has in mind in 7:10-11 is probably some form of Jesus' teaching on divorce (cf. Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18; Matt 5:32; 19:9). In the second passage Paul establishes the right of Christian workers to receive financial support for their work. He makes the case in order to argue that he does not exercise such a right himself. The saying of Jesus referred to is most likely Luke 10:7 (cf. Matt 10:10). In addition to these specified sayings of Jesus, there are several places in the letters where allusions to sayings of Jesus can be discerned...such as in Rom 12:14-21 and 14:14:

Romans	The Gospels
Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them (12:14)	Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. (Luke 6:28; cf. Matt 5:44)
Do not repay anyone evil for evil (12:17a)	If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also...

(Luke 6:29; cf. Matt 5:39b-40)

If it is possible, so far at it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (12:18)

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God...If your enemies are hungry, feed them, if they are thirsty, give them something to drink. (12:19-21)

I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself; but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean.

(Rom 14:14)

(Cousar, 58-60)

Be at peace with one another.
(Mark 9:50b; cf. Matt 5:9)

But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...
But love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return.
(Luke 6:27, 35a; cf. Matt 5:44a)

There is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.
(Mark 7:15; cf. Matt 15:11)

A second observation is that these examples all come from the paraenetic or ethical sections of Paul's letters. One scholar has noted that "at no point in his letters does Paul quote any saying of Jesus or plainly allude to one, in which he is expounding the central content of his gospel..." The gospel, for Paul, concerns the death and resurrection of Jesus and how God has worked and is working through this message for the salvation of the world. According to Bultmann...Paul stood on the other side of Easter and proclaimed Jesus as God's saving event, not as a teacher of timeless truths. (Cousar, 61-62)

The term "pre-Pauline formula" refers to phrases, statements of faith, poems or hymns, and so on, which may have originated with Paul's predecessors, been adopted by Paul, and later woven into one of his letters. Examples include the Christological hymns in Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20. Another well-known instance is the baptismal teaching found in Galatians 3:26-29:

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, no longer slave or free, no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise.

Again, there are good reasons for suggesting that this may be a traditional formulation learned by Paul, perhaps at Antioch. The passage is marked off from its context by the change from "we" forms, used by Paul before and after this section, to "you" (plural) forms in these verses; the phrase "no longer slave or free, no longer male and female" has no particular relevance to Paul's argument in Galatians (though "no longer Jew or Greek" certainly does) and thus suggests the quotation of an already established creed. (Horrell, 31)

Acts 13:9 – “Saul, also known as Paul” – seems to mark for Luke a point of transition to Paul’s Gentile mission, where after he uses his Roman rather than Semitic name. Acts 13:9 also conveys the most likely picture concerning Paul’s names: rather than changing his name at any point, he had two names, one Jewish and biblical, the other Latin/Roman, as was common among Jews of his time. (Horrell, 38)

Paul’s references to the collection he is taking up for the church in Jerusalem enable a relative ordering of Paul’s Corinthian and Roman letters (1 Cor 16:1-4, then 2 Cor 8-9, then Rom 15:25-28). They also indicate Paul’s plans for a third visit to Jerusalem, to deliver the money, though we do not know from Paul’s letters whether or not that journey was made. (Horrell, 46)

Acts mentions five visits of Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30; Acts 11:29-30; Acts 15:1-29; Acts 18:22; and Acts 21:15ff). The problem, then, is how to correlate the visits mentioned by Paul with those listed in Acts. Here scholars diverge widely in their solutions. The evidence of the epistles and of Acts could be correlated in the following way, reducing the five visits mentioned in Acts to the three found in the Epistles:

“acquaintance”	Gal 1:18	Acts 9:26-27
“conference”	Gal 2:1-10	time = Acts 18:22
“offering”	Rom 15:25-28	Description = Acts 15:1-29 time = Acts 21:17ff Description = Acts 11:29-30

(Horrell, 47-48)

In the account of his escape from Damascus, Paul refers to the “governor of King Aretas”. (2 Cor 11:32-33) The reign of King Aretas IV (an Arabian king, ruler over the Nabateans from 9 BCE to 38-40 CE, when he died) and more specifically on the date when the Nabateans acquired control over Damascus (perhaps 37 CE). If these dates are secure then Paul’s escape from Damascus can be dated to around 37-39 CE. (Horrell, 49)

Luke mentions an edict of the emperor Claudius compelling Jews to leave Rome and thus gives the reason why Priscilla and Aquila have come to Corinth. This edict is also mentioned by the Roman historian Suetonius and is dated by the fifth-century Church historian Orosius to 49 CE. Thus Paul’s arrival in Corinth appears to be datable to sometime shortly after this date, around 49-50 CE. (Horrell, 49)

Luke also reports that Paul was publicly accused by Jews in Corinth during the time when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia (the Roman province in which Corinth was located). Fragments of an inscription found at Delphi mention Gallio as proconsul of the province and enable his proconsulship to be dated to 50-51 or 51-52 (probably the later). On the traditional dating of Claudius’ edict this fits in rather well with Luke’s description of Paul’s eighteen-month stay in Corinth (Acts 18:1-18). Paul would have arrived shortly after the edict – say around 50 CE – and left during Gallio’s proconsulship, sometime probably in 51-52. (Horrell, 49)

We know from Paul that after his three year “reclusive” period he went up to Jerusalem and spent fifteen days with Peter, and also met James the brother of Jesus (Gal 1:18). Then, Paul tells us, he spent time in Syria and Cilicia (Gal 1:21), presumably engaged in missionary activity, about which only Acts gives details. Hints in the letters seem to confirm, and certainly do not contradict, Luke’s picture here: soon after his first visit to Jerusalem as a Christian convert Paul joined the church at Antioch (in Syria) and acted as a missionary alongside Barnabas, or possibly as a junior partner to Barnabas (see Acts 11:26-15:40; cf. Gal 2:1, 9, 11-13; 1 Cor 9:6). This was Pauls’ so-called “first missionary journey.” From about 46 CE, Paul began an extensive independent journey, the so called “second missionary journey,” which took him through Galatia, Macedonia and Achaia, where he founded churches. Fourteen years after his first visit to Jerusalem (or, possibly, fourteen years after his conversion) Paul returned there again, this time for the “conference” –sometimes referred to as the first Apostolic Council – called to discuss the issue of Gentile converts and the requirements to be placed upon them. Scholars date the conference to 51 CE, although some place it earlier. After this conference Paul undertook another extensive tour, his so-called “third missionary journey”, returning first to Antioch (Gal 2:11-14), then moving on to Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8), Macedonia (2 Cor 1:16; 2:13), Illyricum (cf Rom 15:19) and Corinth (2 Cor 13:1; Rom 15:26), finally preparing once more to return to Jerusalem with the proceeds of his long-standing collection project. It is from this period of missionary activity that almost all of Paul’s letters come. The exceptions are Paul’s earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, widely agreed to have been written from Corinth during Paul’s founding visit there, and possibly Philippians and Philemon, which may have been written during Roman imprisonment. We do not know form Paul whether or not he actually made that planned visit to Jerusalem to deliver his collection. It is only from Acts that we hear of his final visit there, although Luke is strangely quiet about the collection into which Paul invested so much time and energy (see only Acts 24:17; cf. 24:26; 11:27-30). Only from Acts do we learn of Paul’s arrest in Jerusalem and his subsequent transfer to Rome to face trial there (Acts 21:17ff), though most accept the validity of Luke’s account concerning these points. Acts ends its story with Paul under house arrest in Rome, free to proclaim the gospel there. Early church tradition records as the fate of Paul: he and Peter were executed in Rome under the emperor Nero, sometime in the 60s CE (1 Clement 5:2-7; Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.25.5). (Horrell, 52-54)

Paul would have been born about 1-5 CE, was in his early 30s when he first appears in Acts, in his 50s when he wrote the extant letters, and about 60 when he died. Paul hails from Tarsus in Cilicia, “an important city” (Acts 9:11; 21:39; 22:3), the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia. [Tarsus is in modern day Turkey, but fairly close to Syria, and was a port on the Mediterranean] Tarsus was a famous university town, where Stoicism was the dominant philosophy. Paul learned at least the basics of the rhetorical skills that were part of every Greek education. He belonged to a traditional Jewish family where the ancient traditions and language were preserved. He not only knew Greek but was conversant, perhaps fluent, in the Aramaic of Palestine and the Hebrew of the Scriptures. He knew something of rabbinic and scribal theology and biblical interpretation, and may have studied in Jerusalem as pictured in Acts (22:3) That his numerous biblical citations are typically from the LXX makes it clear, however, that the Greek translation of the Hellenistic synagogue remained his Bible. Though he belonged

to the literate minority that could compose complex documents in Greek, he learned a trade, and could support himself at manual labor (1 Thess 2:9; 1 Cor 4:12; 9:6; 2 Cor 11:27). Paul himself never describes the nature of his work. Acts calls him a skenopoios, traditionally “tentmaker”, but the term also can mean “leather worker” or “linen worker”. Tarsus was well known as a center of the linen industry. Paul was not an independent businessman but a handworker who leased temporary space or worked at his craft for others. It was not an occupation of high social status. (Boring, 182-183)

Paul’s missionary activity is generally split up into three “journeys” or phases. The first began when he left Jerusalem for “Syria and Cilicia” (Gal 1:21). Boring mentions that this period was from 12-14 years and we do not know much about it. We do know that he worked with Barnabas in the Antioch church and they were sent to Jerusalem with an offering since the Christians there were suffering from a famine. After returning home they went on a missionary journey to Cyprus and some towns in the southern part of Galatia (Perga, another Antioch, Lystra, and Derbe). All of this work seemed to be done under the auspices of the Antioch church. Peter was also working in that church. At the end of this period we find out about the Council in Jerusalem to iron out issues related to Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians living together in the same congregations (Acts 15:1-29 and Gal 2:1-10). One central part of the decision was that Gentile Christians should not have to conform to the Jewish laws regarding circumcision and dietary restrictions. Things seem to go smoothly for a while, but in Galatians 2:11-21 Paul reports that representatives of James came and convinced Peter to quit eating with the Gentiles, but to maintain his Jewish practices. (Self)

We have only Paul’s side of the story. In his version of the incident, he soundly denounced and defeated the compromising Peter and “even Barnabas,” his former colleague in the Gentile mission. Since Peter remained in Antioch, and Antiochene Christianity turned away from its previous radical openness, in the direction of the more conservative Jacobite Jewish Christianity of Jerusalem, it appears that Paul lost the debate and decided he could no longer participate in the Antiochene mission program. Peter would remain in Antioch, and Paul would leave. (Boring, 193)

Paul’s second missionary journey (or phase) then began when he chose Silvanus (“Silas” in Acts) to be his new coworker and they made a journey by land through Cilicia visiting congregations already established there. Timothy was converted by Paul in Lystra and joined the team. Paul received a vision (Acts 16:6-10) to travel to Macedonia. Due to the shift to “we” language at this point in Acts, Boring believes that the author of Luke/Acts joined them on the journey as well. They established a new church in Philippi where Paul and Silvanus were imprisoned. Then they all travelled to Thessalonica where they established another new church. When they were forced to leave there, they converted people in Beroea. Paul then left Silvanus and Timothy behind while he travelled to Athens and then Corinth where he worked with Priscilla and Aquila who had just arrived from Rome after Emperor Claudius’ expulsion of the Jews. They began another new church there. Silvanus and Timothy rejoined them with news that the church in Thessalonica was flourishing and they wrote the letter that we know as Thessalonians to encourage that congregation. Thessalonians is the earliest writing we have in the New

Testament. Then Acts tells us that Paul returned to Jerusalem and Antioch before beginning a third missionary journey (or phase) during which he seemed to focus most of his time in Ephesus. After a round-about journey back to Jerusalem to avoid a plot against him, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem but appealed as a Roman citizen and so began a lengthy legal journey that would take him all the way to Rome. It is believed that Paul was probably martyred in Rome during Nero's persecution after the great fire there in 64 CE. (Self)

Paul's Letters

1 Thessalonians – It is widely agreed that 1 Thessalonians is Paul's earliest letter, written to the Christians in Thessalonica from Corinth, during Paul's mission to found the church there, and the most commonly accepted date is 50-51 CE. The tone of the letter is very affirming and supportive. (Horrell, 62)

Galatians – In stark contrast to 1 Thessalonians, Galatians is a letter in which Paul's anger is obvious. Here there is no opening "thanksgiving", as is usual in Paul's letters; instead Paul expresses his astonishment that the Galatians are so quickly turning to "another gospel" and curses those who proclaim this other gospel. Missionaries announcing a more "Jewish" version of the gospel have told them that if they truly want to be children of Abraham, to belong to God's people, then they must obey the law set out in scripture and be circumcised. (Horrell, 63)

1-2 Corinthians – The two letters in the New Testament addressed to the Corinthians are clearly only part of a more extensive correspondence between Paul and the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians Paul refers both to an earlier letter he had sent (a letter now almost certainly lost) and to a letter he has received from the Corinthians. In 2 Corinthians Paul refers to a letter written "with tears", in much distress and anguish, which he wrote prior to writing 2 Corinthians 2 and 7. Paul also visited Corinth at least three times: once when he founded the church there, once on a painful visit (2 Cor 2:1), and again when the collection was ready to be taken to Jerusalem (2 Cor 8-9; Rom 15:25-26). Paul's first concern in 1 Corinthians is with the divisions among the community in Corinth (1:10ff), though he goes on to deal with a whole range of issues. After the writing of 1 Corinthians relations between Paul and the Corinthians worsened. Apparently Paul paid a second visit to Corinth which turned out to be somewhat disastrous (2 Cor 1:23-2:11): it seems most likely that he was confronted by a particular opponent, probably a prominent member of the church at Corinth, and withdrew, probably to Ephesus. Paul then wrote his "painful letter" to Corinth, a letter which may be lost, or which may be largely identical with 2 Corinthians 10-13. That statement implies, of course, that 2 Corinthians may contain what was originally more than one letter. Indeed, 2 Corinthians is the Pauline letter whose unity is most often questioned. 2 Corinthians 10-13 is angry and confrontational, full of Paul's reluctant "boasting", comparing himself with his opponents. 2 Corinthians 1-7 on the other hand is dominated by Paul's thankfulness for an apparent reconciliation with the Corinthians and his bold comparisons of his own ministry with that of Moses (2 Cor 3). Chapters 8-9 deal with the collection for Jerusalem, and express Paul's hopes that the Corinthian's contribution will soon be ready. It may be that 2 Corinthians 10-13 originally came some time before 1-9 (i.e. as the painful letter), or that it was written later, due

to fresh opposition to Paul arriving in Corinth. Whatever was the original order of events and letters, the letter to the Romans indicates that the Corinthians did get their money ready, and that Paul went there along with others to receive it and take it to Jerusalem (Rom 15:25-26). (Horrell, 64-65)

Philemon and Philippians – Both of these letters were written from prison. (Horrell, 65)

Romans – Unlike Paul's other letters, Romans is addressed to a church Paul had not founded or previously visited. Moreover, Romans presents an extended and intricate theological argument which runs throughout the first eleven chapters and which forms the basis for the ethical instruction given from chapter 12 onwards. (Horrell, 67)

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