

Romans Introduction Part 3 and Chapter 1

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Consider the Early Church in Acts:

They had no doctrinal information from Paul which we enjoy and know today. The problems and issues which Paul had to address were formative in our doctrine today. These were necessary conflicts which required Paul to address with great passion and hard work.

Proposed Order of Paul's Epistles (Justin Johnson)

Below is a chart with a proposed chronology based upon internal evidence of the scripture in relationship to the history book of Acts. It is noted which are clearly understood and which are not.

Book	When in Acts	Clear	Unclear
1 Thessalonians	Acts 18:5	✓	
2 Thessalonians	Acts 18:11		✓
Galatians	Acts 19:10		✓
1 Corinthians	Acts 20:1	✓	
2 Corinthians	Acts 20:1-2		✓
Romans	Acts 20:2-3	✓	
Philemon*	Acts 24:23-27		✓
Colossians*	Acts 24:23-27		✓
Ephesians*	Acts 24:23-27		✓
Philippians*	Acts 28:30	✓	
1 Timothy	After Acts		✓
Titus	After Acts		✓
2 Timothy*	After Acts	✓	

* Indicates a book written in bonds or prison

Scriptural Evidence for the Order of the Epistles

1 Thessalonians

Paul mentions going to Athens alone but leaving Timothy behind (1 Thess 3:1-3). This event occurred in Acts 17:14-15.

By the time Thessalonians was written, Timothy had returned to Paul (1 Thess 1:1; 1 Thess 3:6). Therefore, the earliest that it could be written would be in Acts 18:5 when Timothy returns to Paul.

Paul stayed in Corinth for 1.5 years (Acts 18:11). It would make sense that he might have heard something of the ministry in Thessalonica during that time in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

2 Thessalonians

2 Thessalonians is assumed to be written shortly after the first epistle due to the same names mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 1:1.

Galatians (Galatia is an area, not a city)

No one knows for certain when Galatians was written, although there are strong opinions in both directions.

It is generally agreed that it was written after Acts 15 where Paul went to Jerusalem to meet with Peter, James, and John, which Paul mentions in Galatians 2:1-9.

Its similar doctrinal content to Romans invites some to couple it with Romans written from Corinth in Acts 20:3, but there is no further evidence for this.

Paul says they are “so soon removed” (Gal 1:6), which may identify it as an early writing in Paul’s ministry to the Galatians, or it could be placed after any one of his travels to the area in Acts 15:41, Acts 16:6, or Acts 18:23.

Another possible reason to go to Galatia:

Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was possibly a medical condition or disease. If it was tuberculosis or malaria, it could have been beneficial for Paul to go to a higher elevation. Galatia was close to 6300 feet.

Many physical disabilities also affect the eyesight and it seems probable that even Paul himself experienced difficulty with his vision. Paul took advantage of various writers to do the actual writing of at least some of his epistles. A mentioned writer for Paul is Tertius who wrote down the book of Romans and added his own greeting to the church in Rome (Romans 16:22). Other times we see Paul adding a salutation with his own hands (1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Thessalonians 3:17) as opposed to physically writing the entire epistles.

Paul even wrote in large print as noted in Galatians 6:11 “*See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand.*” Other evidences of poor vision can be found earlier in the epistle to the Galatians. Paul says that because of physical infirmity he preached the gospel to the Galatians at the first - **Galatians 4:13**: *You know it was because of a bodily ailment that I preached the gospel to you at first,¹⁴ and though my condition was a trial to you, you did not scorn or despise me, but received me...*

This is why some have speculated that the physical infirmity was a disease which affected his eyesight and the higher altitude in Galatia would have been better for him, especially if the disease was malaria. And only two verses later Paul states that the Galatian church would have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him if it were possible (Galatians 4:15).

1 Corinthians

Apollos had already ministered in Corinth by the time Paul writes to them (1 Cor 3:6). Apparently, Apollos was not at that time in Corinth (1 Cor 4:6; 1 Cor 16:12) which places this epistle after Acts 19:1.

Paul mentions staying at Ephesus with many adversaries in 1 Cor 16:8-9. He also mentions the “beasts at Ephesus” in 1 Cor 15:32, which at least in part is described in Acts 19.

He also mentions his purpose to go to Jerusalem through Macedonia in 1 Cor 16:3-5 which he first purposed in Acts 19:21-22.

Timothy is sent by Paul to Corinth (1 Cor 4:17) when he wrote the epistle, but Timothy is back in Paul’s company in Acts 20:3-4 when Paul goes to Greece himself. So it must have been written after Acts 19:21-22 and before Acts 20:1.

2 Corinthians

2 Corinthians is assumed to be written shortly after 1 Corinthians based on the mention of forgiving the repentant brother who was rebuked in 1 Corinthians (2 Cor 2:6-7). However, some time had passed, because Paul had left Ephesus and was then writing from Macedonia (2 Cor 7:5, 2 Cor 9:4; cf. Acts 20:1).

Paul mentions it is the third time he is ready to come to Corinth (2 Cor 12:14; 2 Cor 13:1). This leads some to the uncertain conclusion that this is either the third epistle he writes, or that he has been to Corinth twice before.

A question arises from the presence of Timothy in 2 Cor 1:1 that could place this epistle at even a later date on a subsequent trip to Macedonia.

Romans

Romans is most certainly written from Corinth (Cenchrea) evidenced by Paul staying with Gaius in his house, along with the presence of Erastus and Phebe (Rom 16:1, 23).

Also the same company of people found in Romans 16:21 is also found in Acts 20:4 when Paul was leaving Greece to return to Jerusalem (also mentioned in Romans 15:25-26).

Philemon & Colossians

Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians were all written while Paul was in bonds (Eph 6:20, Col 4:3, Phm 1:1). For this reason, it is assumed all three were written from Rome along with Philippians.

However, Paul was in prison multiple times, and so it is unclear exactly which imprisonment produced these epistles.

Philemon must precede, if only shortly, Colossians since it is in Philemon that Onesimus is saved while in bonds with Paul (Phm 1:10). Paul sends Onesimus as a faithful brother to Colosse in Col 4:9 and in Philemon 1:12.

It can be shown that Philemon, the man, was a Colossian, because of his association with Archippus and Onesimus (Phm 1:2, Col 4:17).

Philemon and Colossians are linked in time primarily because the same companions with Paul are mentioned in both epistles, which would mean Tychicus traveled with Onesimus with both epistles to Colosse (Col 4:7).

Ephesians

There is not much information to date Ephesians, except that Tychicus delivered the letter (Eph 6:21). For this reason alone, it is assumed Ephesians was written at the same time as Colossians and Philemon, although Tychicus may have traveled to Ephesus multiple times (2 Tim 4:12).

It is possible that Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians were written while Paul was in bonds at Caesarea where he spent two years in bondage with relative liberty (Acts 24:23-27).

Philippians

Philippians is counted among Paul's epistles written while in prison since he mentions being in "bonds" (Phil 1:7, Phil 1:14-16).

Though Paul was in prison many times, his mention of "the palace" (Phil 1:13), and greetings from "Caesar's household" (Phil 4:22) fit nicely with Paul's imprisonment in Rome upon his appeal to Caesar (Acts 28:16, Acts 28:30).

1 Timothy

No one knows for certain exactly when 1 Timothy was written (albeit before 2 Timothy), nor whether Paul was in bondage while he wrote it (1 Tim 3:14).

Paul says Timothy was abiding in Ephesus while he went into Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3). There are many possibilities during the Acts record that would allow Timothy to abide in Ephesus, but none at the same time that Paul would be in Macedonia.

For this reason, it is assumed that it was written after the history of Acts.

Titus

No one knows when Titus was written (albeit before 2 Timothy for the reasons stated above). That Titus was "left in Crete" would indicate it was after the history recorded in Acts (Titus 1:5). The only time it is mentioned that Paul traveled to Crete was during his trip to Rome in Acts 27:12.

Titus 3:12 indicates Paul was not in bonds and was traveling to Nicopolis by his own determination.

2 Timothy

Though we cannot place 2 Timothy very well into the history of the book of Acts, the content shows clearly it is Paul's last epistle written at the end of his life.

He records the turning away of all in Asia, which would be later in his ministry (2 Tim 1:15). He commends Onesiphorus who helped him while he was in Rome in the past (2 Tim 1:16-17).

That Titus was no longer in Crete, but Dalmatia places 2 Timothy after the epistle to Titus 1:5. Since Paul was free when he wrote Titus (Titus 1:12), this proves that Paul was imprisoned again after he was released from his bonds in Rome.

He mentions his own execution in 2 Tim 4:6, and finishing his course in 2 Tim 4:7.

Historians believe that Paul was beheaded in Rome, but not crucified, because he was a Roman citizen. Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, and Tarsus, where Paul was born, was a free city (see Acts 21:39). The Emperor Pompey made Cilicia a Roman province in 64 BC, and its capital, Tarsus, was a free city from the time of Augustus. Although it is unknown exactly how his parents

became citizens of Rome, Paul was a Roman citizen by birth, which was a privilege many did not have. Some could buy Roman citizenship, but it was pricey (see Acts 22:28). The privileges of citizenship explain how Paul escaped flogging in Acts 22:25–27 and was able to appeal for a hearing before Emperor Nero in Acts 25:10–11. Some say Paul's parents were carried off as prisoners of war from the Judean town of Gischala to Tarsus. Presumably enslaved to a Roman, they were freed and granted citizenship.

Does when Paul writes his books matter?

If *what* Paul wrote, and *to whom* he wrote, is most important, then why does it matter *when* he wrote?

It is not necessary to know when the epistles were written to believe what they say. In the same way, we do not need to know the day or year a law was passed in order to be subject to it now.

However, knowing where in the history of Acts Paul wrote his epistles may help shed some light on the surrounding circumstances, persecutions, and opposition that Paul mentions throughout his ministry.

Paul's ministry to unbelieving Israel stopped in Acts 28, along with the supernatural powers the Holy Ghost provided. Knowing when Paul wrote would explain why we find more writing about Israel and spiritual gifts during his earlier epistles.

To benefit from a scriptural chronology the best method to date Paul's epistles is by studying the scripture rightly divided, and not by the speculative methods of unbelieving higher criticism.

What God would have us know with certainty about Paul's ministry, he has inspired and preserved in the Bible.

Why will it take a long time to go through this book? Here are the questions Paul will answer in Romans:

1. What is the good news (gospel) of God?
2. Is Jesus really God?
3. What proves He is God?
4. Why did He come?
5. What is a saint?
6. What is God like?
7. How can God send people to hell?
8. What will happen to people who have never heard the gospel?
9. Why do men reject God and Christ?
10. Why are there false religions and idols?
11. What is man's biggest sin?
12. Why is there sex perversion, hate, crime and those other things and why are they so rampant?
13. What is the standard by which God condemns people?
14. How can a person who has never heard be held responsible?
15. Are Jews more responsible to believe than Gentiles?
16. Who is a true Jew?

17. Is it any advantage to be Jewish?
18. How good is man?
19. How bad is man?
20. Can anyone keep God's law?
21. How do we know we're sinners?
22. How are we justified and forgiven?
23. How is a Christian related to Abraham?
24. What is the importance of Christ's death?
25. What is the importance of His resurrection?
26. What is the importance of His present life?
27. For whom did Christ die?
28. Where can men find real peace and hope?
29. How are we related spiritually to Adam & how are we related spiritually to Christ?
30. What is grace? And what does it do?
31. How does a person die spiritually to be reborn?
32. What is the Christian's relation to sin?
33. How important is obedience?
34. How are law and grace related to one another?
35. Why is it such a struggle to live the Christian life?
36. How many natures does a believer have?
37. What does the Holy Spirit do for us?
38. How intimate is a Christian's relationship to God really?
39. Why is there suffering?
40. Will the world ever be any different?
41. How can I pray properly?
42. What does predestination mean?
43. How secure is a Christian?
44. What is God's present plan for Israel?
45. What is His future plan for Israel?
46. Why have the Gentiles been chosen?
47. What is our responsibility to Israel?
48. How is a person saved?
49. What is the basic bottom line for Christian commitment?
50. What is the Christian's relationship to the world, to other Christians, to the unsaved, to the government?
51. What is love and how does it work?
52. How do we deal with neutral things, things that are neither right nor wrong?
53. What is true freedom?
54. How important is unity in the church?

Romans 1:10-12 *Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, ² which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, ³ concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh ⁴ and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, ⁵ through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, ⁶ including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ,*

⁷ To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints:

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

Longing to Go to Rome

⁸ First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. ⁹ For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you ¹⁰ always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you. ¹¹ For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— ¹² that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. ¹³ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you (but thus far have been prevented), in order that I may reap some harvest among you as well as among the rest of the Gentiles. ¹⁴ I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. ¹⁵ So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

ROMANS

	THE GOSPEL			
	Saving the Sinner	Concerning Israel	Concerning Christian Conduct	
Introduction — Personal (1:1–17)	Depravity of humanity	Divine sovereignty and human will	Social	
	Grace of God	Past, present, and future of the nation	Civil	
	Justification by faith		Personal	
	Sanctification through the Spirit			
	Security of the saint			
	CHAPTERS 1:18–8:39	CHAPTERS 9–11	CHAPTERS 12:1–15:13	
Emphasis	Doctrinal	National	Practical	
Response	Faith	Hope	Love	
Doctrine of God	Wrath	Righteousness	Glory	Grace
Doctrine of Humanity	Fallen	Dead	Saved	Struggling
				Freed
Doctrine of Sin	Exposed	Conquered	Explained	Forgiven
Scope	Dead in sin	Dead to sin	Peace with God	Love for others
Theme	God's righteousness is given to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ.			
Key Verses	1:16–17			
Christ in Romans	Jesus is the focus of the gospel and the means of salvation by God's grace apart from works (1:1–4, 16–17).			

Conclusion — Relational (15:14–16:27)