Paul and his Theology

by

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Saul of Tarsus, better known as Paul, was the man above all others who led the Christian advance into uncharted, non-Jewish territory. The record of his missionary journeys and his trip to Rome occupy the latter half of the Book of Acts. In his travels Paul preached in some of the most important cities of the Greco-Roman world - Antioch, Thessalonica, Philippi, Ephesus, Corinth, Athens and Rome itself.

Paul's letters are among the earliest parts of the New Testament. Thirteen documents bear his name. He wrote to groups of churches (Galatians), to single congregations (Corinthians), to people who had become Christians through the missionary work of his colleagues (Colossians), and to Christians whom he had never even met (Romans). Some of his letters may have been intended for more than a single audience (Ephesians), while others were personal correspondences with fellow ministers (Timothy and Titus). In all, the Pauline correspondence was deeply influential in shaping the character and theology of the Christian church. It has been said that every reformation in church history was in one way or another a rediscovery of Paul.

Here, we will study Paul as Paul. We will look at his ethnic and religious background, his conversion, and his theology. Especially, we want to explore his ideas of revelation and tradition, his understanding of grace and faith, and his metaphors for salvation, such as, redemption, reconciliation, justification and adoption. We will look at his ideas about freedom, humanity, Israel and the church. We will examine the remarkable polarities that have had such profound implications for Christian thought, such as, flesh and spirit, sin and righteousness, and law and grace. Finally, we will survey his thought concerning the future and the afterlife.

Paul, the Man

Paul describes his personal background in several places. He was a Jew of the Diaspora and a citizen of Tarsus, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia (Ac. 21:39). The term πολιτης (***polites*** = citizen) probably meant that his name appeared on the roster of Tarsus' citizens and that he was born into a family that held citizenship. In fact, as Paul claimed, he was born a Roman citizen (Ac. 22:26-28; cf. 16:37); a privilege that meant his father was a Roman citizen before him. How Paul's Jewish family attained citizenship we are not told. Perhaps his father rendered some special service to the Roman cause.[1] As a citizen, Paul would have had three names, the *praenomen* (forename), *nomen gentile* (family name) and *cognomen* (additional name). We know only his *cognomen*, Paullus. Of course, he also had a Jewish name,

[1] F. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), p. 35, 37.

Saoul (sometimes spelled Saulos), which transliterates into English as Saul.[2]

Tarsus, the city of Paul's birth, maintained a large textile industry, and it is probably due to this industry that Paul learned his trade as a tentmaker (Ac. 18:3; cf. 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8). Roman writers speak of a local material manufactured in Tarsus called *cilicum*, a coarse cloth of woven goat's hair.[3]

Elsewhere, Paul also says that he was a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:6). His Jewish pedigree was impeccable. He was descended from the clan of Benjamin (Ro. 11:1), and it is likely that his Jewish name, Saul, was bestowed upon him in memory of Benjamin's greatest hero (cf. 1 Sa. 9:1-2). His claim to be a "Hebrew" carries more weight than simply that he was Jewish (cf. 2 Co. 11:22), for the term distinguished him from Hellenistic Jews who attended Greek-speaking synagogues. Hebraistic Jews, on the other hand, attended Aramaic or Hebrew-speaking synagogues. Paul's expertise in Hebrew/Aramaic was somewhat a surprise to the Jews in Jerusalem (Ac. 21:40-22:2), but it can hardly be doubted that it was his mother tongue, since God's call to him on the Damascus Road was in Hebrew/Aramaic (Ac. 26:14). Furthermore, though he was a citizen of Tarsus, he grew up in Jerusalem, studying under the great Jewish teacher Gamaliel, the leading Pharisaic scholar of the day (Ac. 22:3; cf. 26:5). Even after he became a Christian, Paul was not averse to maintaining the claim that he, like his father before him, was still a Pharisee (Ac. 23:6).[4]

Some residual questions remain concerning Paul that cannot be answered with finality. Was Paul ever married? Certainly he was not married during his Christian ministry (1 Co. 7:7-8), though he defended his right to be married (1 Co. 9:5). The fact that he categorized himself with the αγαμοις (= the unmarried, whether widowed, divorced or never married), a term that he seems to distinguish from widows and virgins (1 Co. 7:8, 27-28), raises the question. Some have argued that if Paul served or intended to serve on the Sanhedrin he would necessarily have been married, but though that may be so, there is no clear evidence that the Sanhedrin was ever in Paul's experience or vision for the future.

Was Paul considered to be a rabbi? Certainly he studied under a famous rabbi, Gamaliel (Ac. 5:34; 22:3), the grandson of Hillel and known in rabbinical writings as Gamaliel the Elder. The Babylonian Talmud mentions a student of Gamaliel who showed "impudence in matters of learning" who might have been Paul (*Shabbath* 30b). Still, there is no indication that Paul considered himself to be a rabbi or that others did so. In the New Testament, the Hebrew/Aramaic title "rabbi" or "rabboni"

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[2] The idea that Saul's name was changed to Paul when he became a Christian is without foundation.

[3] Bruce, p. 35.

[4] Paul's claim, εγω **Φ**αρισαιος ειμι (= I am a Pharisee), appears in the present, emphatic tense.

was used of John the Baptist and Jesus, but not Paul.

Paul, the Christian

Paul once described his conversion as the moment when Christ "took hold of him" (Phil. 3:12). This about-face occurred while Paul was serving as the official antagonist against Christians (Ga. 1:13-14; 1 Co. 15:9; Phil. 3:6), a sect that called themselves "the Way" (Ac. 9:1-2; 19:9, 23; 22:4, 14, 22).[5] Saul had even participated in the lynching of a Hellenistic Jewish Christian in Jerusalem (Ac. 7:58; 8:1). He was on his way to Damascus, extradition papers in hand, to serve a summons on all Jews who had accepted the teachings of The Way (Ac. 22:4-5). In his mind the notion of a crucified messiah-at least one who was the real messiah-was absurd. (There had been no end to false messiahs, most ended up crucified.[6]) A crucified messiah, of course, was virtually a false messiah by definition, and in any case, no self-acclaimed leader who had been hung from a tree could be the hope of Israel. Such a person was under a divine curse (Dt. 21:32). The idea of a crucified messiah was a self-contradiction.

The shock could not have been greater when Paul was struck down on the Damascus Road amidst a blinding, heavenly light and confronted by a voice from heaven that could only have come from God (Ac. 9:3-6). When Paul asked, "Who are you, Lord?", the voice came back in Aramaic/Hebrew, "I am Jesus!" Temporarily blind, Paul was led into the city where he met Ananias, a Christian, who baptized him as a new convert to Christ (Ac. 9:8-19).[7] For Paul, this encounter with the resurrected Christ was comparable to what the original apostles experienced after Easter (1 Co. 9:1; 15:8). It was for him the gospel by revelation (Ga. 1:11-12, 15-17). Of course, in spite of Paul's defense of the gospel by revelation, he also places importance on the gospel as handed down by the apostles, too (1 Co. 15:1-4, 11; 11:23).[8]

Paul, the Missionary

Paul's stunning reversal after his revelation on the Damascus Road was quickly followed by his divine call to be a missionary. Indeed, when Paul later

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[5] The term "Christian" did not arise until later (Ac. 11:26). Early on, especially within the Palestinian Jewish community, the title of choice for the followers of Jesus was "The Way".

[6] N. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), pp. 170-181.

[7] I have used the traditional language of "conversion," but some argue that it is better to say that Paul was "called," not "converted", cf. K. Stendahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 7-23. This may sound like a distinction without a difference. To be sure, Paul did not change deities nor did he change Scriptures. On the other hand, he definitely taught that justification from sin came through the message of the cross (e.g., Ro. 3:21-26) and that his former compatriots, who had not yet accepted the faith of Christ, were not yet saved (Ro. 10:1).

[8] In both these passages, Paul speaks of "what I received." The Greek verb παραλαμβανω (= to receive) carries the nuance of receiving something by tradition, cf. F. Bruce, *Paul & Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), pp. 41-54.

recounted his Damascus Road experience, he said that he was commissioned by Christ to the gentiles "to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God" (Ac. 26:17-18). Apparently only days later, after he briefly returned to Jerusalem, Paul was praying in the temple, and again the Lord said to him, "Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (Ac. 22:21). Early on, this calling thrust Paul into publicly preaching among his fellow Jews at Damascus, Jerusalem and Judea the call to repentance and the claim that Jesus was God's Son (Ac. 9:19b-22; 26:20). When he returned to Jerusalem, the Christians were suspicious that his reversal might be a ploy until he was befriended and defended by Barnabas (Ac. 9:26-30). By his own testimony, he also went to Arabia, probably into Nabatea (Ga. 1:15-17), though whether this was before or after his return to Damascus and Jerusalem is unclear.[9] If while in the area of Arabia and Damascus he preached Christ, his message apparently was not well received by the authorities, for he had to be smuggled over the city wall of Damascus to escape arrest (2 Co. 11:32).

Three years after his conversion, Paul went back to Jerusalem for fifteen days where he met Peter and James (Ga. 1:18-19). He then returned to his home in Tarsus, Cilicia (Ac. 9:30), where he evidently did some early missions work (Ga. 1:21-24). With the encouragement of Barnabas, Paul relocated to Antioch, Syria, where he continued to develop his teaching ministry (Ac. 11:25-26). When it became apparent through a prophetic warning that a severe famine would strike the Mediterranean world during the reign of Claudius Caesar, Paul and Barnabas led a delegation from Antioch with a relief fund to help the Jerusalem Christians in their distress (Ac. 11:27-30). This trip may be the one referred to by Paul as occurring fourteen years later (Ga. 2:1ff.). If so, then there was a second purpose to the trip. Paul wanted to compare his understanding of the gospel with the leaders of the Jerusalem church to make certain that both he and they were in accord before he set out to continue any missionary work among non-Jews (Ga. 2:2-10).[10] It was from Antioch that Paul launched his extensive missionary journeys throughout Asia Minor and Greece (Acts 13-20).

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[9] Scholars suggest that the Arabia of which Paul speaks was the nearby Nabatean kingdom ruled by Aretas IV (9 BC-AD 40), cf. Bruce, *Paul, Apostle of the Heart*, pp. 81-82.

[10] The chronology of Paul's career is not entirely clear at this point. For one thing, concerning the "fourteen years" in Ga. 2:1, it is not certain whether he means fourteen years after his conversion or fourteen years after his previous visit. Of course, later Paul visited Jerusalem again after his first missions tour (Acts 15), so the visit of Ga. 2:1 could also refer to a later time. However, two factors tip the scale in favor of Ga. 2:1 being the earlier visit: the encouragement that Paul would continue to remember the poor (Ga. 2:10), which seems appropriate in light of the relief mission, and the fact that in Galatians 2 Paul seems intent on listing in order every contact he had with the Jerusalem church. If so, then his first contact would have been right after his conversion (Ac. 9:26ff.), and his second visit must have been the relief mission in Galatians 2:1 (Ac. 11:29-30).

Paul, the Letter Writer

Thirteen letters in the New Testament bear Paul's name.[11] Critical scholars usually do not credit Paul with all of them,[12] but evangelical scholars are content to abide by the opinion of the early church that they all are genuinely from his hand. The collected letters of Paul as we have them began circulating among the early churches at Paul's own impetus (Col. 4:16). Though we do not have any Pauline autographs, we have very early copies.[13]

Paul's letters were not merely abstract theses about theology. They were written in concrete situations to address problems in the churches, a way of extending his presence when he could not be there personally (1 Co. 5:3). He wrote to answer questions that had been posed (1 Co. 7:1) and to explain the gospel and its implications for the Christian life. Hence, in each letter it is important for modern readers to pay close attention to historical context as an aid to interpretation.

In one of his letters, Paul seems to be writing with his own hand (Phlmn 19). On another occasion, he dictated his correspondence to an amanuensis or secretary (Ro. 16:22). Whether this latter was his common practice is unknown, though if it was he seems to have penned the conclusions himself (1 Co. 16:21; Ga. 6:11; Col. 4:18; 2 Th. 3:17). In addition to writing letters in his own hand, several options were currently acceptable in the Greco-Roman world, including verbatim dictation to a secretary, dictation of a letter's substance to a secretary allowing the secretary to give the letter its full form, and authorizing a secretary to write in one's name.[14] In any of these cases, Paul's personal signature at the end authenticated the composition as genuinely from Paul. Even if Paul wrote most of them in his own hand, however, one should not assume that the letters were dashed off spontaneously. They demonstrate careful logic, preparation and forethought.

The letters were carried by personal courier to their recipients, since the imperial mail was not available to private individuals.[15] Titus seems to have carried 2

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[11] Older English versions (KJV and earlier) sometimes headed the Book of Hebrews as a letter of Paul, but this designation was never part of the Greek text of Hebrews. Today, even the most conservative scholars are dubious about a Pauline authorship. There was no consensus among the ante-Nicene fathers, and Eusebius' conclusion, "Who wrote this epistle, in truth, God knows", is a fair statement about the continuing ambiguity of its author, cf. *Ecclesiastical History*, VI.xxv.14.

[12] Most critical scholars attribute 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus to a Pauline disciple, and some credit the authorship of 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians and Colossians to a Pauline disciple or associate, cf. W. Meeks, ed., *The Writings of St. Paul* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1972). Of course, the intriguing reference to a letter to Laodecia as well as the reference to an earlier letter to the Corinthians than our canonical 1 Corinthians (1 Co. 5:9-11) means that altogether Paul wrote more than the thirteen canonical epistles.

[13] The Chester Beatty papyri (p46) are probably the earliest copies of Paul's letters that still survive, and they date to about AD 200, cf. B. Metzger, *The Test of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University, 1968), pp. 37-38.

[14] W. Doty, *Letters in Primitive Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), p. 41.

[15] The *cursus publicus*, Rome's official postal service, did not carry private correspondence. Wealthy families

Corinthians (2 Co. 8:16-21). Epaphroditus probably carried the Philippian letter (Phi. 2:25-30). Tychicus probably carried the Colossian letter (Col. 4:7-8). Phoebe probably carried the Roman letter (Ro. 16:1-2). Since these epistles were to be read publicly, it is likely that the couriers, as Paul's personal representatives, would have been the first to read the letters to the churches and were immediately available to give public explanation.[16]

Paul's letters follow a fairly stereotyped form popular in the Greco-Roman world. Though he made some Christian adjustments to this form, it nevertheless adhered quite closely to the basic style of the Hellenistic letter:[17]

- *Opening* (sender, addressee, greeting)
- *Thanksgiving or blessing* (often with intercession and/or an eschatological climax)
- *Body* (introductory formulae; often having an eschatological conclusion and/or an indication of future plans)
- *Paraenesis* (ethical exhortations)
- *Closing* (benedictions, greetings, sometimes a mention of the writing process)

Paul and Jesus

It is popular in some circles to denigrate Paul as one who distorted Jesus. Some, like the members of the self-promoted Jesus Seminar, have reconstructed Jesus into a simple, peasant philosopher whose social mission was overpowered by Paul's invention of the theology of the cross.[18] Others, pleading a vacuum of historical knowledge about Jesus, since they reject the historicity of the gospels, view Paul as the inventor of Christianity along the lines of the Greco-Roman mystery religions. Here, Paul is more Greek than Jewish.[19] All such interpretations strike most traditional Christians as shocking, even blasphemous, since they are in direct and significant conflict with the historic faith of the Christian church. Furthermore, these positions can only be maintained by dismissing as inauthentic or irrelevant important areas of the New Testament witness. It is probably fair to say that they yield more

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entrusted mail to hand-picked slaves, commercial enterprises employed their own letter carriers, the *tabellarii*, but the Christians, if Acts 15:22 is any indication, chose trusted couriers from among themselves, cf. O. Seitz, *IDB* (1962) III.114.

[16] Doty, p. 46.

[17] Doty, p. 27ff.

[18] For a penetrating critique of this approach to Jesus, see L. Johnson, *The Real Jesus* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

[19] That Paul's background was rabbinic Judaism, not Greek philosophy, has been thoroughly explored in W. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

about the biases of the academicians than anything particular about Paul or Jesus.

On the other hand, the relationship between Paul and Jesus often is left unexplored by the mass of lay Christians. While Paul's letters probably were written earlier than any of the gospels, they offer only a minimal amount of information about Jesus' earthly life and ministry, and at the very least, this prompts the question, "Why?" Even the casual reader of Paul is bound to observe that for him the central aspect of Jesus' life and mission was the cross and resurrection, and it is altogether fair to say that for him the cross was the keystone of the gospel (Ro. 4:25; 5:6-10; 1 Co. 1:17-18, 22-24; 2:2; 11:26; 2 Co. 4:10; Ga. 3:1; 6:14; Ep. 2:14-17; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:19-22; 2:13-15; 2 Ti. 1:10). At the same time, he says little about Jesus' life and public ministry. Was Paul uninterested in Jesus' earthly life? Some have thought as much, but a more likely conclusion is that Paul could assume that the basic facts about Jesus' life were already known to the early Christians through the verbal witness of the apostles. What was needed for his churches was a sound perspective about the theological meaning of Jesus' life, death and resurrection, and especially, how his life, death and resurrection impacted the daily lives of believers.

Paul and the Historical Jesus

Paul is our earliest literary authority for the historical Jesus, whom he calls "Christ according to the flesh" (2 Co. 5:16, Greek text). While Paul offers no narrative history of Jesus' life, it is clear that Paul knows the story. Like Matthew and Luke, he knows that Jesus was a Jew whose genealogical connections go back to David and Abraham (Ac. 13:23; Ro. 1:3; Ga. 3:16; 2 Ti. 2:8). He knows Jesus had brothers, one of whom was named James (1 Co. 9:5; Ga. 1:19). Though Paul does not refer at all to Jesus' baptism, miracles or disputes, he knows that Jesus lived under Jewish law (Ga. 4:4), that his life was characterized by meekness and gentleness (2 Co. 10:1), and that he sought to please others rather than himself (Ro. 15:1). Paul recounts that Jesus was betrayed (1 Co. 11:23a) and on that same night instituted a memorial supper with bread and wine (1 Co. 11:23b-25). He knows Jesus was executed by crucifixion (1 Co. 1:23; Ga. 3:1, 13; 6:14), and that the Jews of Judea somehow were implicated in his death (1 Th. 2:14-15). He knows that Jesus was buried (Ro. 6:4; 1 Co. 15:4; Col. 2:12), and he certainly knows the account of the resurrection (Ro. 1:4; 6:5; 1 Co. 15:16-20; Phil. 3:10, etc.). He is aware of the various disciples who saw Jesus alive after his resurrection (1 Co. 15:5-7) and names some whose witness to Jesus' resurrection is not recorded in the gospels.

Had Paul ever seen Jesus personally? The question is intriguing because of Paul's own testimony that, though he was a citizen of Tarsus, he was brought up in Jerusalem in the school of Rabbi Gamaliel (Ac. 22:3). Possibly he lived with his sister or other relatives (Ac. 23:16). If so, the odds are good that he was in Jerusalem

at the time of Jesus' death, an event that could hardly go unnoticed. At the same time, with his family in Tarsus he may have been out of the country, so the question is moot.

Did Paul recount the story of Jesus' earthly life in his missionary preaching? Again, we cannot be sure. While Luke offers a few examples of Paul's sermons, they are brief outlines. In one, Paul demonstrates that he knows of the ministry of John the Baptist (Ac. 13:24-25) along with Jesus' rejection, crucifixion and resurrection (Ac. 13:27-31). We should probably assume that some details of the story of Jesus' life attended his preaching, but the Book of Acts is silent on this matter.

Paul and the Sayings of Jesus

What cannot be disputed is that Paul was familiar with the teachings of Jesus, since he quotes from them on occasion (Ac. 20:35;[20] 1 Co. 7:10-11//Mk. 10:9-12; 1 Co. 9:14//Lk. 10:7; 1 Co. 11:23-25//Mt. 26:20-29//Mk. 14:17-25//Lk. 22:14-23; 1 Th. 4:15-17//Mt. 24:30-31). In addition, Paul quotes a saying from the risen Lord made to him personally (2 Co. 12:9), while the reference in 1 Corinthians 14:37, similar to Acts 20:35, may refer to some saying of Jesus unrecorded in the canonical gospels or simply to Paul's authority as one who had the "mind of Christ" (cf. 1 Co. 2:16).

In addition to the passages where Paul explicitly quotes Christ, there are others where he probably alludes to sayings of Jesus. His reference to the return of Christ as a thief (1 Th. 5:1-8) echoes Jesus' parable of the thief (Mt. 24:43-44//Lk. 12:39-40; 21:34-35). His affirmation that he was "convinced by the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean of itself" probably alludes to Jesus' teaching to the crowds (Mk. 7:15-19//Mt. 15:11). A number of echoes to Jesus' words seem implicit in some of Paul's ethical teachings:

- *Ro. 12:14-21* parallels Mt. 5:9, 39-41, 44; Mk. 9:50; Lk. 6:27-29
- *1 Co. 4:11-13* parallels Mt. 5:11-12, 44; Lk. 6:22-23, 27-28
- *Ro. 13:8-10; Ga. 5:14* parallels Mt. 22:34-40; Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:25-28
- *Ro. 13:7* parallels Mt. 22:21; Mk. 12:17; Lk. 20:25
- *Ro. 8:15; Ga. 4:6* parallels the *Abba* address for God (Mk. 14:36)[21]

Paul's various references to "the kingdom of God" should also be included

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[20] This saying of Jesus has no parallel in the canonical gospels. Apparently, it was a saying in the oral tradition of the church.

[21] There are good grounds for believing that Jesus consistently addressed God with the Aramaic *Abba*, even when the Greek text contains πατερ, cf. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, trans. J. Bowden (New York: Scribners, 1971), pp. 61-68.

(Ro. 14:17; 1 Co. 4:20; 6:9-10; 15:50; Ga. 5:21; Col. 4:10-11; 1 Th. 2:11-12; 2 Th. 1:5), since this was such a critical term in the teachings of the Lord, and it was not common in 1st century Judaism or Hellenism.[22] Finally, there are many Pauline texts-more than thirty-that have varying degrees of probability as echoing the sayings of Jesus.[23]

Revelation and Tradition

To whatever extent Paul depended upon the stories about Jesus and the sayings of Jesus, it still remains to explore how he acquired this knowledge. Paul goes to some pains to demonstrate that his contact with the Jerusalem church was minimal (Ga. 1:11-2:14). After his conversion, he did not go to Jerusalem to see the apostles; but rather, he went to Arabia and Damascus (Ga. 1:17). Three years later, he met Peter, presumably for the first time (Ga. 1:18), and the only other leader he saw was James, the brother of Christ (Ga. 1:19). Afterward, he returned to Cilicia, the province of his birth, and then went to Antioch, Syria (Ga. 1:21). All this time he was unknown, other than by reputation, to the Judean churches (Ga. 1:22-23). Still another fourteen years passed before he came to Jerusalem again, this time on a relief mission (Ga. 2:1; cf. Ac. 11:25-30).[24]

This limited contact with the Jerusalem church raises the question of how Paul came to know about Jesus. Certainly the fifteen days he spent with Peter and James must have been enlightening (Ga. 1:18-19), but Paul is equally clear that his understanding of the gospel was neither concocted nor taught to him by others (Ga. 1:11-12). Instead, he insists that he knew the gospel by direct revelation! In another letter, Paul does concede that he "received" the creedal formula he in turn passed on to the Corinthians (1 Co. 15:3). Both passages use the same verb, παραλαμβανω (*paralambano* = to receive by tradition), and in one he says he did not receive the gospel in this way and in the other he says he did. Hence, there must be some sense in which Paul can say both without compromising his integrity.

This apparent tension is resolved by Paul's experience on the Damascus Road. When Christ appeared to him and called him to be a missionary to the gentiles, several central truths were implicit in that confrontation. First, Jesus was Lord! When Paul turned toward the heavenly voice and said, "Who are you, Lord?", he could not have been more shocked than when he heard the response, "I am Jesus" (Ac. 9:4-5;

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[22] S. Kim, "Jesus, Sayings of," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. G. Hawthorne & R. Martin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), p.480.

[23] S. Kim, 480-481.

[24] Some interpreters assume that the visit of Ga. 2:1 coincided with the council in Acts 15, but if so, it would have seriously weakened Paul's argument. He seems to be detailing, as accurately as possible, his contact with the Jerusalem church. To omit a visit in such a listing would verge on duplicity.

22:7-8; 26:14-15). Second, the concept that the church was the body of Christ also was implicit in this revelation, for the Jesus who confronted Paul asked, "Why do you persecute me?" The idea that when Paul was persecuting the Christian church he was *ipso facto* persecuting Jesus Christ must have been the earliest ground of Paul's later teaching that the church is the body of Christ. Finally, the calling to be a missionary to the *goyim* was also a revelation (Ac. 9:15; 22:21; 26:17-18). The Jerusalem church for a long time had maintained exclusivity toward the Jewish people (Ac. 11:19), but here was something new! Later, no doubt, Paul could compare his revelation to the similar one that had come to Peter (Ac. 10), but Paul heard it directly from Jesus before he ever heard it from anyone else!

So, what did Paul receive through the tradition of the church? Certainly he uses the language of tradition to refer to a body of knowledge held in common by Christians (1 Co. 11:2; 2 Th. 2:15).[25] When he speaks of the Lord's table, he uses the same kind of language to describe the last supper and the post-resurrection witnesses (1 Co. 15:1-7). Hence, Paul received historical details about Jesus by the tradition of the church, but he firmly maintained that his understanding of whom Jesus was and what he meant came to him directly by revelation. In the end, his understanding of Jesus and that of the other apostles was in harmony (Ga. 2:2, 7-10).[26]

Paul's Gospel

Paul's contribution to the Christian message was distinct enough that he could refer to it personally as "my gospel" (Ro. 2:16; 16:25; 2 Ti. 2:8; cf. 1 Co. 15:1; Ga. 1:11; 2:2; 1 Th. 1:5; 2 Th. 2:14). In fact, the word gospel occurs in Paul's letters far more than the rest of the New Testament. The word itself, meaning "good news", had both Jewish and Roman orientations prior to the birth of Christianity. In the LXX, the expression appears in several critical messianic passages (Na. 1:15; Is. 40:9; 52:7; 61:1), so Christians were not slow in making the connection between the "good news" promised by the prophets and the coming of Jesus. In the Roman world, the word had a particular application to the cult of the emperor, beginning with Augustus Caesar, whose birthday on the 9th day before the Kalends of October was proclaimed as "gospel" or "good news."[27] Jesus, by contrast, was God's good news about the coming of his Son.

So what was Paul's gospel? He could say that God would judge the secrets of

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[25] The word παραδοσις (*paradosis* = tradition) in both these passages refers to what is passed down to others.

[26] For more extensive discussion about "revelation" and "tradition" as it relates to Paul's message, see F. Bruce, *Paul & Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1974), pp. 27-54.

[27] In the Roman *Decree of the Provincial Assembly* about 9 BC, this proclamation was issued as "the beginning of joyful good news for the world," cf. F. Danker, *Luke [PC]* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), pp. 6-7; R. Martin, *ISBE* (1982) II.529.

all hearts "as my gospel declares" (Ro. 2:16). He could also speak of "my gospel" as "the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past but now revealed" (Ro. 16:25). He could summarize the whole by simply urging: *Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel* (2 Ti. 2:8; cf. Ro. 1:1-4)!

The Cross and the Resurrection

As mentioned earlier, the cross and resurrection of Jesus were central to Paul's theology. He could describe this event-and in Paul both parts function as a single event-as of "first importance" (1 Co. 15:3). It is fair to say that when Paul refers to one he implies the other. He preached the crucifixion as so important that he could write of his resolve to preach not merely nothing less, but nothing else (1 Co. 2:2; cf. 1:23). It was specifically in the message of the cross that God's power to save became effective (1 Co. 1:17-18). As for Christ's resurrection, its historical reality was so important that the whole evangelistic task was rendered futile if it were not true (1 Co. 15:13-19).

To Paul, the Christ event was the center of time (Ga. 4:4), not in the sense of an equal number of years before and after Christ, but in the sense of the preeminent event in the whole historical process.[28] It was the supreme act of salvation-history, God breaking into time and space for human salvation (Ac. 13:26-39; 2 Co. 4:3-6). The Christ event culminated with the cross and resurrection. It is not that Paul was uninterested in Jesus' earthly life and ministry, but rather, that he clearly understood that apart from the cross and resurrection, Jesus would have been perceived in the Greco-Roman world as a prophet, at best, but not the Son of God who saves the world.

It is no accident that modern thinkers who reject Paul also tend to see Jesus as a prophet or philosopher more than a Savior.[29] For them, his death was incidental to his life, while for Paul the cross was absolutely indispensable for knowing what Jesus was about. For Paul, Jesus was not a social reformer; he was the Savior of the world, and the salvation he offered was mediated through the cross and resurrection alone. It is precisely by his resurrection that Jesus "was declared with power to be the Son of God" (Ro. 1:1-4). To the Greco-Roman intellectuals whom Paul encountered, the resurrection of Jesus was the watershed. All other theological ideas about creation, the exclusiveness and oneness of God, and so forth, were abstractions that could be relegated to philosophical speculation. But when Paul preached Jesus crucified and risen from the dead, this claim they could not ignore (Ac. 17:31-32). His message

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[28] The whole subject of early Christianity's conception of time is beyond the scope of this study, but a full treatment can be found in O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time*, trans. F. Filson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964).

[29] Again, the Jesus Seminar group is typical of this reductionism, but its members do not stand alone.

about the cross and resurrection was equally a watershed for his Jewish listeners. It could not be passed off as a rabbinical dispute, but it was a time-space event that demanded either allegiance or rejection (Ac. 17:2-4; 23:6-7; 26:22-23).

All the concepts of Jesus as the Christ, Jesus as the suffering Servant, Jesus as Lord, and Jesus as God's Son are integrally connected to Jesus as risen from the dead. The critical moment for Paul, of course, was his confrontation by Jesus on the Damascus Road. The voice from heaven left him no option. If this was Jesus, it was the risen Jesus! Paul asked, "Who are you, Lord?", and the reply was unequivocal: *I am Jesus of Nazareth* (Ac. 9:5; 22:8; 26:15)! Paul's response was just as unequivocal, for he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus was God's Son (Ac. 9:20) and the Christ (Ac. 9:22). In fact, in Paul's correspondence, the title Christ (= Messiah) functions not merely as a descriptive designation but as a proper name![30] That we are accustomed to using the word Christ as a proper name today is owed primarily to Paul. Furthermore, Paul also preached that the Christ would suffer (Ac. 26:23), an obvious link to the suffering servant of Isaiah. He boldly announced that this death was directly linked to human sin (1 Co. 15:3). Jesus' servanthood and humiliation culminated in his death on the cross (Phi. 2:7-11), and it is hard not to think that Paul has in mind Isaiah's suffering servant of the Lord who would be humiliated (Is. 49:7; 50:6-7; 52:14-15; 53:3) and executed for the sins of others (Is. 53:4-12).

The lordship of Jesus concerns his exaltation, and once again, the confrontation on the Damascus Road is paramount. How could Paul see Jesus as anything other than exalted in view of what happened? Hence, the confessional formula for all believers is simply that Jesus is Lord (Ro. 10:9; 1 Co. 8:6; 12:3; 2 Co. 4:5; Phi. 2:9-11). Finally, Paul frequently speaks of Jesus as God's Son (cf. Ro. 1:4, 9; 8:29; 1 Co. 1:9; 2 Co. 1:19; Ga. 2:20; 4:6; Ep. 4:13; Col. 1:13).

In such assertions, Paul is consciously Trinitarian, though he would have been unfamiliar with that term (cf. 2 Co. 13:14). Paul never displaces the Father with the Son as though they were indistinguishable. At the same time, he faithfully contends for the ancient Hebrew *Shema* (Dt. 6:4), while recognizing that Jesus is Lord (1 Co. 8:6). His epistolary addresses and/or conclusions invariably contain equal references to "God the Father" and "the Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Co. 1:3; cf. Ro. 1:1; 2 Co. 2:2; 13:14; Ga. 1:3; Ep. 1:2; 6:23; Phi. 1:2; 4:19-20; Col. 1:2-3; 1 Th. 1:2-3; 2 Th. 1:2; 1 Ti. 1:2; 2 Ti. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phlmn 3). None of this would have been possible, given Paul's background in Judaism, outside of what happened on the Damascus Road.

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[30] D. Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981), p. 248.

The Righteousness of God

If the cross and resurrection are the historical events upon which Paul's gospel and understanding of Jesus depend, the righteousness of God is the hinge upon which his theology swings. It is in the gospel of Jesus Christ that God's righteousness is revealed (Ro. 1:16-17; 3:21). Long ago, Martin Luther realized how critical was a proper understanding of God's righteousness in Pauline terms.[31]

Consistently, Paul understands the righteousness of God as something that comes by faith. This righteousness is God's gift (Ro. 5:17), and it is mediated to humans through Christ (1 Co. 1:30; 2 Co. 5:21). Hence, it simply cannot be humanly contrived. To illustrate and define this concept, Paul contrasts two different kinds of righteousness, God's righteousness that comes by faith and human righteousness that comes by conformity to the law. Part of the background for this distinction no doubt depended upon the rabbinic association between righteousness and acts of piety.[32]

For Paul, the righteousness that comes by faith is something God credits or imputes to the believer (Ro. 4:4-8, 11b). The ancient model is Abraham who, because he believed God, was credited with righteousness (Ro. 4:9-11a, 22; Ga. 3:6). Abraham is the paradigm for all who put their faith in Christ Jesus in order to receive this gift of righteousness (Ro. 4:16-17, 23-25; Ga. 3:7-9). There could be no greater contrast between the two. On the one hand, there are those who "go about to establish their own righteousness," a righteousness based on conformity to the law (Ro. 10:3, 5; cf. Ga. 2:21) or what he elsewhere calls "legalistic righteousness" (Phi. 3:6). This approach was especially typical of various Jewish groups, who advocated Torah intensification as the prerequisite for the advent of God's kingdom and/or as the way

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[31] Luther, in his study of the Roman letter, remarks: *I had indeed been captivated with an extraordinary ardor for understanding Paul in the Epistle to the Romans. But up till then it was not the cold blood about the heart, but a single word in Chapter 1, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed,' that stood in my way. For I hated the word 'righteousness of God,' which I had been taught to understand philosophically regarding the formal or active righteousness, as they called it, with which God is righteous and punishes the unrighteous sinner.*

Though I lived as a monk without reproach, I felt that I was a sinner before God with an extremely disturbed conscience. I could not believe that he was placated by my satisfaction. I did not love, yes, I hated the righteous God who punishes sinners, and secretly, if not blasphemously, certainly murmuring greatly, I was angry with God...

At last, by the mercy of God, meditating day and night, I gave heed to the context of the words, namely, 'In it the righteousness of God is revealed, as it is written, 'He who through faith is righteous shall live.'' There I began to understand that the righteousness of God is that by which the righteous lives by a gift of God, namely by faith. And this is the meaning: the righteousness of God is revealed by the gospel, namely, the passive righteousness with which merciful God justifies us by faith.... Here I felt I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates. There a totally new face of the entire Scripture showed itself to me, cf. *Preface to the Latin Writings (LW,* 34:336-337), as quoted in J. Gonzales, *A History of Christian Thought* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), III.28-29.

[32] The LXX, for instance, often translated the Hebrew word צדקה (= righteousness) by the Greek term for alms. Hence, "righteousness" was often understood to be a charitable act. Intertestamental literature even indicated that almsgiving could atone for sin (Sirach 3:30; cf. 29:12; Tobit 12:8-9, RSV). Jesus, along these same lines, addressed those who were preoccupied with making obvious their acts of righteousness (Mt. 6:1).

to please God. It was a righteousness that one could produce for oneself (Phi. 3:9).

On the other hand, Paul urges a righteousness that is not self-produced. Such righteousness is, as he says, "by faith from first to last" (Ro. 1:17; 3:22; 9:30; 10:4-13; Ga. 5:5; Phil. 3:9). It is not based on conformity to law (Ro. 3:20-21; 4:13-14; 9:31; 10:5; 2 Co. 3:7-9; Ga. 2:21; 3:21-22). It is not based on righteous works (Ro. 4:6-8, 10-11; 9:32; Ep. 2:9). Instead, it is God's free gift to the believer (Ro. 4:4-5; 5:15-17; 6:23; 2 Co. 5:21; Ep. 2:8).

Of course, the argument naturally would be advanced that righteousness, as a gift is unfair or unjust. Paul is well aware of this contention and preempts it. Paul concedes that the very notion of divine judgment confirms God's justice in condemning sinners (Ro. 3:5-6). The problem, however, is not that God is unjust in condemning sinners, but rather, that there is no one righteousness-not even a single one (Ro. 3:9-18, 23). If salvation were to be given on the basis of merit, no one would ever be saved. The whole world stood condemned (Ro. 3:19). Hence, a kind of justice had to be established that did not depend upon merit while at the same time it did not exempt sin from punishment. This justice Paul finds in the cross, the Christian *Yom Kippur* (cf. Lv. 16), where Jesus became a sacrifice of atonement for all (Ro. 3:25-26). Such atonement demonstrates God's justice, both in the past and the present. In the past, God did not exact the full penalty for sin, not because he was unjust, but in view of the coming atonement of Christ. In the present, God vindicates his own character while offering righteousness as a gift to those who put their faith in Jesus Christ, the one who became the ἱλαστήριον (*hilasterion* = place or means of propitiation).[33]

Grace and Faith

For Paul, the primary realities of salvation are grace and faith. It is hardly incidental that of the New Testament appearances of the word χαρις (***charis*** = grace, favor, gracious care), Paul's letters have more occurrences than all the other New Testament writers combined.

> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast. *Ephesians 2:8-9*

[33] The arguments between translating ἱλαστήριον as propitiation (= appeasment of an angry God) or expiation (= cleansing from sin) are beyond the scope of this study. However, here we agree with the treatment of Leon Morris that the idea of God's wrath against sin cannot be extracted from ἱλαστήριον without distorting its basic meaning, cf. L. Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), pp. 144-213. In the ἱλαστηριον God both punished sin and forgave sin in the crucifixion of Christ Jesus. Punishment was exacted upon a substitute, while sinners were set free from their guilt. Hence, Paul could say, "Christ died for us" (Ro. 5:8).

Again and again, Paul urges this same understanding of salvation (cf. Ro. 3:22-24; 4:4-5, 16; 5:1-2, 6-8; Tit. 3:4-7). The connection between salvation and grace is so intimate that Paul can use the word grace as a virtual substitute for the word salvation (e.g., 1 Co. 1:4; 2 Co. 4:15; 6:1-2). The blood of Christ through which forgiveness of sins is possible is "in accordance with the riches of God's grace" (Ep. 1:7). Hence, it is God's grace that brings salvation (Tit. 2:11).

The meaning of grace can be clarified by observing the other words Paul uses to describe or qualify grace or that he uses in association with grace. The gospel is the message of grace in all its truth (Col. 1:6). Grace is something offered freely (Ro. 3:24; 1 Co. 2:12; Ep. 1:6). It is a gift, not a reward (Ro. 5:15-17; 6:23; 2 Co. 9:15; Ep. 2:8). God gives this gift out of his love, mercy and kindness (Ro. 2:4; 5:6-8; 8:35-39; 9:15-16; 11:30-32; 12:1; 15:9; Ep. 1:4; 2:4-7; 3:18; 5:25 1 Ti. 1:13-16; Tit. 3:4-7). To illustrate this quality of grace as God's free gift, Paul adopted a personal policy with respect to offerings. Though it was a Greek custom for teachers to receive payment for instruction,[34] and though Paul defends his right to receive such offerings on the basis of Scripture (1 Co. 9:6-12), Paul steadfastly refused to do so in order to illustrate, as he put it, "...that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge" (1 Co. 9:12, 15, 18; 2 Co. 11:7; cf. 2 Th. 3:7-10).[35]Because salvation comes by grace, it is guaranteed (Ro. 4:16; 14:4; Ep. 1:13-14; 2 Co. 1:21-22).

The polar opposites of salvation by grace are salvation by wages or obligation (Ro. 4:4), salvation by obedience to law (Ro. 3:28; 4:14; 6:14; Ga. 1:6ff; 2:19-21; 5:4), and salvation by religious works (Ro. 4:4; 11:6; Ep. 2:9; 2 Ti. 1:9). Luther's addition of the word *sola* to grace-grace alone-is entirely justifiable. Salvation by grace is not "both/and". It is not grace plus righteous works, grace plus obedience to the law of Moses, or grace plus anything else. It is grace alone! As Paul puts it, *And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace* (Ro. 11:6). Grace, then, is God's unmerited initiative to provide human salvation.

The connection between grace and faith is everywhere affirmed in Paul. Christians are those who "by grace...believed" (Ac. 18:27). Initially, it is important to recognize a linguistic connection that does not translate well into English, that is, the fact that the words πιστευω (***pisteuo*** = to believe) and πιστις (***pistis*** = faith) are cognate. If the effective divine initiative is grace, the effective human response is faith. Hence, Christians are saved "by grace" [χαριτί] and "through faith" [διὰ πίστεως] (Eph. 2:8). Luke describes the common response to Paul's preaching as "believing" (Ac. 13:48; 14:1, 23; 16:34; 17:12, 34; 18:8, 27; 19:2, 4, 18; 21:25). The

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[34] M. Thrall, *I and II Corinthians [CBC]* (London: Cambridge University, 1965), p.172.

[35] In order to support himself, Paul worked at his trade of tent-making (Ac. 18:3; 20:34; 1 Co. 4:12a; 1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:8). He accepted offerings from churches when he was not with them, however, offerings they sent to him by courier (cf. Phil. 4:15-16), but he did not accept offerings from churches while he was with them.

threshold of Christianity is not something one does-not a religious act or duty or ritual-but something one accepts as true and important to the point of absolute dependency. Paul could say directly, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved" (Ac. 16:31)!

His letters bear out this emphasis on faith as the effective means of salvation. The classic Pauline statement is: ...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved (Ro. 10:9-10). Like grace, the word faith can serve as a virtual synonym for the gospel (Ga. 1:23; 3:23). The prototype for salvation through faith is Abraham, who believed God and was credited with righteousness (Ro. 4:3-5, 9-17, 22-24; Ga. 3:6-9). The gospel is God's empowerment for salvation to everyone who believes (Ro. 1:16; 1 Co. 1:21; Ga. 3:22). Righteousness is imputed to those who believe so that they are justified by faith (Ro. 1:22; 3:28; 5:1-2; 9:30; 10:4, 6; Ga. 2:15-16; 3:8, 24).

Salvation by grace through faith seemed altogether too easy for those reared in Judaism with its emphasis on Torah intensification as the grounds for the coming of God's kingdom. Paul poses the rhetorical question, since he knows others will ask it, "Is God unjust?" (Ro. 9:14). A variation of the same challenge lies in his rhetorical question, "Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase?" (Ro. 6:1). The answer to both is a firm "no." God is not unjust, and neither is grace an incentive to sin with a high hand. Rather, forgiveness on the basis of Christ's atonement is a form of real justice (Ro. 3:25-26), and grace not only forgives sin, but also calls the forgiven sinner away from sin (Ro. 6:1-14).

Some have suggested that when Paul speaks of the "obedience of faith" (Ro. 1:5; 16:26, KJV) he implies religious duty as the ground for salvation. This conclusion is a fundamental misunderstanding of Paul, and it flies in the face of everything he says elsewhere about the nature of grace and faith.[36]

Finally, it should be observed that even though Paul conceives of faith as a human response to the gospel, such faith is not simply self-generated. Rather, "faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Ro. 10:17). It is the work of the Spirit to enable those who hear to believe what is preached (Ga. 3:2). Hence, Paul can say, "It has been granted to you on behalf of Christ...to believe" (Phil. 1:29), and also, this salvation "by grace...through faith" is "the gift of God" (Ep. 2:8).

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[36] Older English versions, such as the KJV, rendered the Greek phrase as simply "the obedience of faith," leaving the interpreter to gauge the genitive nuance. Much better is the NIV, which reads "the obedience that comes from faith" and "so that all nations might believe and obey him" (genitive of source). Here, obedience is not the ground of salvation, but rather, the natural result that follows faith. Faith, as elsewhere in Paul, is the ground of salvation.

Salvation in Two Directions

What God provides by grace through faith is not only salvation "from" something, but also salvation "toward" something. Salvation is not merely an escape, but also a calling (2 Ti. 1:9). To be sure, the fundamental meaning of σώζω (***sozo*** = to rescue, preserve, save) suggests salvation from some mortal danger, especially death. The metaphorical nuance follows the literal nuance, and in Paul letters it carries the basic idea of being rescued from eternal death. Often, it appears in the passive voice (i.e., to "be saved"), which in turn implies salvation through someone other than oneself. Hence, to "be saved" is to be rescued by Christ, or alternatively, to be saved by grace through faith. Because of Christ's sacrifice, those who believe have been saved from divine wrath (Ro. 5:9; 1 Co. 3:15). They have been emancipated from the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13) and the domination of sin (Ro. 6:6-7, 14, 18, 20-22). They have been set free from the law's curse of retributive justice (Ro. 8:2; Ga. 3:13).

At the same time, salvation is not merely an escape from deserved retribution and the power of evil, but also a positive turning toward a life of righteousness. As Paul puts it, we were saved "...to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do" (Ep. 2:10). Salvation means that "the old has gone, the new has come" (2 Co. 5:17; Ro. 6:4), and an integral part of the "new" is the positive ministry of being Christ's ambassadors through whom God makes his appeal to the world (2 Co. 5:18-20). The faith that saves is also the faith that "expresses itself through love" (Ga. 5:6). Christians are to be rich in good deeds (1 Ti. 2:10; 5:10; 6:18). Especially, they are to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit (Ro. 7:4; Ga. 5:22-23; Ep. 5:8-9; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:10). Thus, salvation calls for discipleship. Bonhoeffer was absolutely right in saying, "The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ."[37]

Salvation in Three Tenses

Without plunging into the tenses of the Greek verb,[38] it still is possible to say that the experience of salvation has past, present and future dimensions, or more precisely, salvation can be viewed simultaneously as a past event, a present experience and a future hope.[39]

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[37] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, trans. R. Fuller (New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 55.

[38] The action in New Testament Greek verbs has as its primary quality the *kind* of action rather than the *time* of action. Hence, Greek verbal tenses express linear action, punctiliar action or completed action. Nevertheless, the time element, even though secondary, is not entirely absent, and any one of these kinds of action may be placed in past, present or future periods when in the indicative mood, cf. W. Chamberlain, *An Exegetical Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1941), pp.67ff.

[39] A. Hunter, *The Gospel According to St. Paul* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), pp.14-57.

As a past event, salvation rests on the completed work of the cross that is appropriated in the life of the believer by faith. In this sense, Paul can write to his converts, "You *were washed*, you *were sanctified*, you *were justified*" (1 Co. 6:11). He can say, "By grace you *have been saved*" (Ep. 2:5), and "In this hope we *were saved*" (Ro. 8:24). The verbal metaphors Paul uses for salvation appear for the most part in the sense of completed action.[40]

> *Christ* ***redeemed*** *us from the curse of the law* (Ga. 3:13).
> *We* ***were reconciled*** *to God by the death of his Son* (Ro. 5:10).
> *Therefore, since we* ***have been justified*** *through faith, we have peace with God* (Ro. 5:1).
> *You* ***received*** *the Spirit of adoption* (Ro. 8:15).
> *Paul...to the church...to those* ***sanctified*** *in Christ Jesus* (1 Co.1:1-2).

The past character of salvation depends both upon the finished work of Calvary and the believer's past acceptance of this finished work. Hence, Christians are those who *have believed* (Ro. 13:11; 1 Co. 3:5; 15:2, 11; Ga. 2:16 (gk.); Ep. 1:13; 2 Th. 1:10; 1 Ti. 3:16; 2 Ti. 1:12; Tit. 3:8). Their salvation in the past tense dates to Christ's death and their subsequent awakening of faith.

At the same time, Paul also speaks of salvation as an ongoing, progressive experience. He can write, "By this gospel you *are [being] saved*" (1 Co. 15:2; cf. 2 Co. 2:15; 1:18).[41] The Christian life is lived out in a new sphere, the kingdom of God's Son (Col. 1:13). Believers "live a new life" (Ro. 6:4). They "stand in grace" (Ro. 5:2). They live as intimate members of God's family (Ro. 8:15; Ga. 4:5; 6:10; Ep. 3:14-15). They are "in Christ" (2 Co. 5:17; Ga. 2:20).[42] In this new life, they "work out their salvation" as God "works in them" (Phil. 2:12-13). They progress toward maturity (Ep. 4:13; Phil. 3:12). They strive to "live up" to what they already have attained (Phil. 3:16). They demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit (Ga. 5:22-23). In this new life, Christians may not know what or how to pray, but the Spirit helps them pray in accordance with God's will (Ro. 8:26-27).

This new life-this present experience of salvation-not only has personal dimensions, it also has corporate dimensions. Christians are part of a community of believers, the body of Christ (1 Co. 12:12). Together, they are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Co. 3:16; Ep. 2:19-22).[43] Paul uses various other metaphors to describe the

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[40] i.e., aorist and perfect tenses

[41] Present, indicative, passive verb and present, passive participles

[42] The expression "in Christ" or "in him" or "in the Lord" occurs some 200 times in the letters of Paul, cf. Hunter, p. 33.

[43] While many Christians are accustomed to reading 1 Co. 3:16 as referring to the individual Christian, the Greek text is explicitly corporate using plural verbs and pronouns.

corporate nature of the Christian community, such as, the "family of believers" (Ga. 6:10), the "bride of Christ" (2 Co. 11:2; Ep. 5:25-27, 32), the "Israel of God" (Ga. 6:16), and "the saints" (2 Co. 1:1, etc.). By far, the most enduring word for this community is "the church", that is, those called out (Ro. 16:1, 5, 23, etc.).[44] Sometimes Paul uses this term to refer to the various Christian congregations scattered throughout the Greco-Roman world (1 Co. 7:17; 2 Co. 8:18-19), and at other times, he refers to the entire body of Christians world-wide (Ep. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23). The connection between salvation as a past event and salvation as a present experience is nowhere so clearly expressed as in the Lord's supper. In the Eucharist, Paul urges the church to look backward to "the night the Lord was betrayed" (1 Co. 11:23). However, in their reenactment of this meal, Christians were proclaiming Christ's death until he comes, too (1 Co. 11:26). Hence, Christians live between what Christ accomplished in the cross and what he will yet do at the end of the age-and this life is the present experience of salvation. In the present, they participate in the blood and body of Christ (1 Co. 10:16-17). Together, they are a single loaf.

Finally, Paul sees salvation as a future hope, or as he says to the Romans, "We *shall be saved*...through him" (Ro. 5:9; Phil. 1:28). Every day that passes, the believer's moment of future salvation is "nearer now than when we first believed" (Ro. 13:11). Christians anticipate the return of Christ, the blessed hope of the church (Tit. 2:13). When Christ comes, they will be joined to him forever (Ro. 6:8; 1 Th. 4:17). Associated with this final stage of salvation will be the resurrection (1 Co. 15:22-23, 42-57; 2 Co. 5:1-4; Phil. 3:20-21) and judgment (Ro. 14:10; 1 Co. 3:12-15; 2 Co. 5:10).

In the end, Paul's description of salvation in three tenses can be expressed in a single statement (Ro. 5:1-2).

Salvation Metaphors

Paul describes the experience of salvation in metaphors or word pictures. While these models are drawn from the culture of the times, one must bear in mind that Paul wrote and lived within the matrix of two cultures, the Jewish culture and the Greco-Roman world. There has been considerable debate among biblical scholars as to whether one or the other of these worlds dominated Paul's thought, but in the end, it is safest to assume that Paul drew from both. Depending on the metaphor at hand, his frame of reference at various times may have been more Jewish or more Greek. In most cases, he could assume that his non-Jewish readers were familiar with basic elements of Old Testament thought promulgated through the synagogues, for as the

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[44] The Greek word ἐκκλησία (= church, called out ones) corresponds to the Hebrew word קָהָל, and refers to the gathered community.

early church's encyclical pronounced, "Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times" (Ac. 15:21).

Half a dozen salvation word pictures are prominent in Paul's letters: reconciliation, redemption, justification, substitution, sanctification and adoption. Together, they fill out the meaning of salvation and the saving relationship between God and humans. A number of these metaphors have been singled out for emphasis in the history of the church. In the Protestant Reformation, for instance, the metaphor of justification dominated the theological discussion. For those in the 19th century American holiness movement, sanctification was especially prominent. Following the fundamentalist-modernist controversy in the early 20th century, the substitutionary atonement held rank for conservative Christians who were concerned to prevent encroaching liberalism from extracting the doctrine of sin from Christian thought. For those from an Anabaptist tradition, reconciliation held first place. In the end, however, it is at least questionable whether or not Paul had a single controlling metaphor. Instead, he probably uses the various metaphors to illustrate particular aspects of salvation, and his word pictures should be used in concert with each other rather than as competing or hierarchical images. Often these word pictures overlap, and in spite of the literary advice that one should not mix metaphors, Paul insists on mixing them frequently.

Reconciliation

The picture of a family quarrel sets the framework for salvation as the repair of the relational breach between God and humans. The word group for this metaphor includes:

- καταλλασσω (***katallasso*** = to reconcile, to change, to exchange)
- ἀποκαταλλασσω (***apokatallasso*** = to reconcile, to form a unity)
- καταλλαγή (***katallage*** = reconciliation)

Sin causes alienation (Ro. 8:7-8). Sinners-and all humans are sinners-are alienated from God, the heavenly Father (Ep. 4:17-19; Col. 1:21). Their fundamental problem is not ignorance but rebellion (Ro. 1:18-28). Furthermore, humans are alienated from each other as the dominate-submissive categories common in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds demonstrate, i.e., masters and slaves, Greeks and Jews, males and females.

Salvation as reconciliation begins with God as the one who takes the initiative to save. The ground for reconciliation is the death of God's Son (Ro. 5:10a; Col. 1:20); hence, humans are reconciled "through Christ" (2 Co. 5:18). It is not that God is reconciled to the world, but that he reconciles the world to himself (2 Co. 5:18a,

19a). The death of Christ becomes the bridge by which humans once again experience fellowship with God, a fellowship that was disrupted by human sin (Ge. 3). This reconciliation concerns not only the future, when believers "shall be saved" (Ro. 5:10b), but also the present, since believers are brought into a state of reconciliation (Ro. 5:11). In the present, they have fellowship with God through Christ (1 Co. 1:9; 2 Co. 13:14; Phil. 2:1; 3:10), and further, they have fellowship with each other. The old dominant-submissive categories no longer hold force for those reconciled to God through Christ (Ga. 3:28; Col. 3:11). The word "peace" describes this state (Ro. 5:1; 8:6; 14:17; 1 Co. 7:15b; 2 Co. 13:11; Col. 3:15; 1 Th. 5:13; 2 Th. 3:16).[45] The rift between Jews and non-Jews was reinforced by ethnic prejudices. This Jewish-Gentile split was as strongly maintained from each side, but especially for Jews, it was rooted in the holiness codes of the Torah that demanded separation.[46] In Christ, these hostilities are abolished so that Christ establishes peace between the two groups (Ep. 2:11-19). Hence, the Christian gospel is the "gospel of peace" (Ep. 6:15).

Finally, believers are called to join God's mission of reconciliation to the world (2 Co. 5:18b, 19b-20). It is not only that God has reconciled believers to himself, he enlists them to become part of a reconciling ministry.

Redemption

The Jewish world is the setting for Paul's redemption word picture. The act of buying back someone or something sets the framework for this metaphor. The New Testament word group expressing this idea includes:

- λυτροω (*lytroo* = to free by paying a ransom)
- ἀπολύτρωσις (*apolytrosis* = release, redemption)
- ἀγοράζω (*agorazo* = to buy, purchase)
- ἐξαγοράζω (*exagorazo* = to buy back, redeem)

For Jews, redemption was an act regulated by the Torah. Firstborn males and animals were redeemed in remembrance of the death of the first-born males in the original Passover (Ex. 13:2, 12-13, 15; 22:29b-30; cf. Ex. 12). Five shekels constituted the redemption price for freedom (Nu. 18:14-16). Land, also, could be

[45] Peace is included in the opening greetings of each of Paul's thirteen letters.

[46] For 1st century Jews, even the dust of a heathen country was unclean, to be regarded as the grave or as contact with a corpse, cf. A. Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), p. 15.

redeemed, since the Torah prohibited selling land permanently (Lv. 25:23).[47] Land that was sold temporarily could be bought back by the seller or his kinsman (Lv. 23:24-28). Furthermore, each Israelite was responsible to pay a ransom price of a half-shekel during a census (Ex. 30:12). Hence, redemption refers to the recovery of persons or things by paying a set price. Even a widow could be redeemed in marriage by a near kinsman (Ru. 2:20; 3:9, 12-13; 4:1-14). In the larger sense, the release of the Israelites from Egypt was understood to be a redemption (Ex. 6:6), and the people of Israel collectively are "the redeemed of the Lord" (Ps. 107:2; 62:12). The release of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity was likewise a redemption (Is. 43:1ff.; 51:11).

For Gentiles, the concept of redemption should be understood in the context of slavery. Manumission of slaves resulted from the *peculium*, that is, the money or property remaining in the slave's possession. Slaves saved such funds in order to eventually purchase their own freedom.[48]

Believers, Paul says, are themselves "bought at a price" (1 Co. 6:20; 7:23; cf. Ac. 20:28). Christ "gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness" (Tit. 2:14). By his own death he has "redeemed us from the curse of the law", that is, the sentence of death for lawbreakers (Ga. 3:13; 4:5). Hence, redemption came by Jesus Christ (Ro. 3:24; 1 Co. 1:30; Ep. 1:7). There is a future aspect to this redemption that will be consummated when Christ returns. At the resurrection, the bodies of believers will be redeemed (Ro. 8:23). At Christ's second coming, he will complete the redemption that already has been sealed by the Holy Spirit (Ep. 1:13-14). Hence, the day of his return is the "day of redemption" (Ep. 4:30).

Paul's use of the redemption theme seems to owe more to the Jewish background than the Roman, since none of the passages where he uses redemption vocabulary connect the redemptive act with slavery and manumission. Furthermore, the payment of the *peculium* for manumission was made in the name of pagan deities within the pagan temple, and the transaction was recorded in the temple records. This context would seem to have afforded Paul little chance for Christian analogy, and in any case, the general Greek words for this transaction are different than Paul's redemption vocabulary.[49]

Justification

Justification is a forensic term and evokes the picture of acquittal before a

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[47] This command is qualified for land within a walled city, which could be sold permanently after a year during which the option for redemption was maintained (Lv. 23:29-31).

[48] E. Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), p. 47.

[49] Ferguson, p. 47.

judge. In court the accused person is pardoned by the judge. The word group expressing this metaphor includes:

- δικαιόω (***dikaioo*** = to justify, acquit, vindicate)
- δικαίωσις (***dikaiosis*** = justification, acquittal, vindication)
- δικαιοσύνη (***dikaiosyne*** = righteousness, justification)

Paul, who gives the classic expression to this theme, had good reason to be familiar with Roman courts. He once stood before the judgment seat of Gallio in Corinth, when the Jews pressed charges against him, though the case was thrown out (Ac. 18:12-17).[50] Following his arrest in Jerusalem, he passed through four years of court proceedings climaxing with his appeal to Caesar. It probably is more than coincidental that most of the appearances of the justification vocabulary appear in the Roman letter that was addressed to those for whom Roman law was particularly well known.

Even more important, however, was the Jewish background of court scenes in the Hebrew Bible in which sinners were summoned before God, the righteous judge, to be held accountable for their sins (cf. Mic. 1:2, 5; 6:1-2; Ho. 4:1; 12:2; Je. 25:31). For Paul, all humans are criminally guilty and deserve the wrath of God (Ro. 1:29-32; 3:23; 5:6-8; Ep. 2:1-3; Tit. 3:3). All equally will appear before God's judgment seat where their most secret thoughts and behaviors will be examined (Ro. 2:2-3, 5-11, 16; 3:6; 14:10; 1 Co. 4:5; 5:13; 2 Co. 5:10; 2 Ti. 4:1, 8).

Justification is God's declaration that the person who believes in Christ, even though a guilty sinner, is viewed as being righteous, because in Christ he has come into a righteous relationship with God (Ro. 4:5).[51] The importance of this concept is apparent from the many times Paul resorts to forensic vocabulary.[52] The sinner is freely justified by grace (Ro. 3:24; Tit. 3:7). He or she is acquitted by faith (Ro. 5:1; cf. 3:28, 30; Ga. 2:16; 3:8, 24). God, the holy judge, justifies the person who has faith in Jesus (Ro. 3:26). This acquittal is based upon the death of Jesus in the sense that God's wrath against sin has been satisfied in the death of Jesus (Ro. 5:9; 8:30-34 cf. 1 Th. 1:10).. The result of justification is that a persons' sins will never be counted against him or her (Ro. 4:7; 2 Co. 5:19). Never will the believer be separated from God's saving love (Ro. 8:35-39)! Condemnation is now ruled out (Ro. 8:1, 33)!

The relationship between the ideas of righteousness and justification must not

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[50] The actual βημα where Paul was arraigned has been excavated by archaeologists, cf. V. P. Furnish, "Corinth in Paul's Time: What can Archaeology Tell us?" *BAR* (May/Jun 1988), pp. 19-20.

[51] G. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 437.

[52] Paul resorts to justification vocabulary several dozen times in his letters.

be missed, since they are cognate words. Justification is the righteousness of God imputed to the believer on the basis of faith in Christ (Ro. 4:4-8, 11b, 16-17, 23-25; Ga. 3:7-9).

Substitution

The concept of substitutionary sacrifice played a critical role in Paul's understanding of salvation, a fact not too surprising, given his Jewish background. Paul certainly would have been familiar with the symbolic imposition of hands in major levitical sacrifices, where the offenses of the worshipper were transferred to the head of the sacrificial animal (Lv. 1:4; 3:2; 4:4, 15, 24, 29, 33; 16:21).[53] The words expressing this concept are:

- προσφορά (***prosphora*** = offering, gift)
- θυσία (***thusia*** = sacrifice, offering)
- πάσχα (***pascha*** = Passover lamb)
- αἷμα (***haima*** = blood)
- περί (***peri*** = concerning)
- ὑπέρ (***hyper*** = in behalf of)
- δία (***dia*** = on account of)

Paul says that Christ gave himself up as an offering and sacrifice to God (Ep. 5:2). Specifically, he identifies Christ as the Christian Passover lamb (1 Co. 5:7), transferring the imagery of the annual Jewish festival to its fulfillment in the death of Jesus. Also, he says Christ is the Christian Yom Kippur (Ro. 3:25). Paul's recitation of Jesus' eucharistic words carries the theme of a sacrifice sealing the new covenant (1 Co. 11:23-25; cf. Ex. 24). Frequently, Paul uses the word "blood" as a synecdoche for the death of Jesus, which also suggests sacrifice (Ro. 3:25; 5:9; 1 Co. 10:16; 11:25, 27; Ep. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:14, 20).[54]

While all these expressions point to the concept of sacrifice, by far the most important words are the prepositions that suggest substitution or representation. God sent his Son "for (περὶ) sin" (Ro. 8:3).[55] Christ died "for (ὑπερ) the ungodly" (Ro. 5:6); he died "for (ὑπερ) us" (Ro. 5:8; 1 Th. 5:10). God did not spare his own Son,

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[53] J. Milgrom, *Leviticus [AB]* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1991), p. 1041.

[54] To be sure, some interpreters have taken blood as a symbol of life rather than death, but Morris is right in concluding that "it is tolerably well certain that in both the Old and New Testaments the blood signifies essentially the death," cf. L. Morris, p. 126.

[55] To be sure, the NIV rendering "to be a sin offering" is a dynamic equivalency for περὶ ἁμαρτίας (= concerning sin) , but it is justifiable.

but "gave him up for (ὑπερ) us all" (Ro. 8:32; Tit. 2:14). Christ was crucified "for (ὑπερ) you" (1 Co. 1:13). He was sacrificed "for (ὑπερ) us" (1 Co. 5:7). His body was broken "for (ὑπερ) you" (1 Co. 11:24). He died "for (ὑπερ) our sins" (1 Co. 15:3), and he died "for (ὑπερ) all" (2 Co. 5:14-15). God made him to be sin or a sin offering "for (ὑπερ) us" (2 Co. 5:21). Jesus gave himself "for (ὑπερ) our sins" (Ga. 1:4; 2:20). In his death, he was made a curse "for (ὑπερ) us" (Ga. 3:13). He gave himself up as a sacrifice "for (ὑπερ) us" (Ep. 5:2, 25). He became a ransom "for (ὑπερ) all" (1 Ti. 2:6). The dozens of Pauline expressions "through Christ" or "through him" or equivalent language using the preposition δία implies the same notion. The substitutionary implications of these prepositions are unmistakable.[56]

Adoption

While the concept of the family was integral to Jewish culture, adoption was essentially Roman, not a Jewish, practice. The metaphor of adoption appears in the Bible only in the letters of Paul, and he uses it without explanation, implying that he expected his readers to define it in a normal Roman way. While there is not a word group for adoption as with other Pauline word pictures, there are other ideas related to family membership that are associated with it, such as, family, sons, brothers and so forth.

υἱοθεσία (***huiothesia*** = adoption)

Adoption under Roman law presupposed the authority of the Roman father (*patria potestas*). As such, a son was under the power of the father in terms not much different than a slave (cf. Ga. 4:1-2). Adoption was a legal process by which a person was emancipated from the authority of his natural father and transferred over to the authority of his adopted father, including a fictitious "sale" of the son. This legal procedure, which was verified by witnesses, could take place at any age. At the time of adoption, old debts were cancelled and the son began a new family life as the heir (and in exchange, his newly adopted father became the owner of any property belonging to the son).[57] Hence, Roman adoption was as much a change of status as a change of parentage.

For Paul, Roman adoption provided a word picture of salvation showing that the believer has been emancipated from the authority of the law with its retributive justice (Ga. 4:3-5) and transferred over into the family of God as a true heir with a true spiritual Father (Ga. 4:6-7; Ro. 8:15-17; Ep. 1:5). The old debt to the law has been cancelled. The old authority has been abrogated. A new Spirit of sonship has

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[56] For extensive discussion, see D. Guthrie, pp. 464-471.

[57] Ferguson, p. 51; T. Rees, *ISBE* (1979) I.53-54; C. Moule, *IDB* (1962) I.48-49; J. Scott, "Adoption, Sonship," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, eds. Hawthorne and Martin (Downers Grove, IL: 1993), pp. 15-18.

been born to create a new relationship in which God is now *Abba* (= papa). The paradigm for this new relationship is comparable to the emancipation of the Israelites from Egypt, when they, too, were accepted as God's children (Ro. 9:4; cf. Ex. 4:22; Dt. 14:2).

In keeping with his "present" and "future" tenses of salvation, Paul understands this adoption metaphor both as something already enjoyed (Ga. 4:6-7; Ro. 8:15-16) and as something yet to be fulfilled (Ro. 8:23). The various familial New Testament terms of family, brothers, household, children, and so forth, while not directly connected to the adoption metaphor, surely express the same bigger picture, that is, that believers who once were outside God's intimate family have now be included.

Sanctification

Whereas the adoption word picture draws from Roman culture, the sanctification word picture draws from Israelite culture, especially the purification laws and rituals in the Torah. The people of Israel were called by Yahweh to be a holy nation of priests (Ex. 19:6). God was holy, so his people were to be holy as well (Lv. 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; Dt. 7:6; 14:2, 21; 26:19; 28:9). This idea of holiness or purity was intended to set the people apart for the God. Purity laws were an outward expression of the theological truth that God was holy and anyone associated with him should be set apart from the mundane, the pagan and the animistic. For the Hebrew, "clean" primarily meant "qualified for approach to God".[58] All the various laws of discrimination, burnt offerings, kosher food and the like aimed at this end. Gentiles, by definition, were unholy, and during the second temple period, the maintenance of racial purity among the Jews was legendary.[59]

For Paul, salvation included the meaning of being qualified to approach a holy God and to live as the holy people of God. Much earlier, David had observed that true inner cleanness was a divine work in the human heart (Ps. 51:6-7, 16-17). Paul would agree, and the word group Paul uses to describe this work and condition of holiness is:

- ἁγιαζω (***hagiazo*** = to make holy, to sanctify, to consecrate, to purify)
- ἅγιος (***hagios*** as a modifier = sacred, holy, pure; as a substantive = holy one, saint)
- ἁγιασμος (***hagiasmos*** = sanctification, holiness, consecration)

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[58] G. Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), p. 173.

[59] For details, see J. Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, trans. F. and C. Cave (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), pp.271ff.

Paul regularly refers to Christians as "saints" or "holy ones." It is obvious that he does not intend some spiritual elite, but rather, the entire Christian community. All Paul's references to saints are plural except Phil. 4:21 (where he says, "Greet every saint..."). Though usually Paul uses the term "saints" to refer to the collective body of Christians in some particular city, on several occasions, he seems to use it to refer to all the Christians in the world (Ro. 8:27; 1 Co. 6:2; 14:33; Ep. 1:15, 18). His opening in 1 Corinthians is paradigmatic: *To the church of God...to those sanctified in Christ Jesus...called to be holy [ones], together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ-their Lord and ours*. Paul could describe his mission to the Gentiles-that non-Jewish people group who were by definition unholy-as "a priestly duty" so that the Gentiles might become "an offering acceptable to God, sanctified [made holy] by the Holy Spirit" (Ro. 15:16).

Once they had accepted the Christian gospel, believers were now "those sanctified in Christ Jesus" (1 Co. 1:2).[60] They were now "saints." They could look backward to their acceptance of the Christian faith as the time when they "were sanctified", that is, set apart as belonging to the people of God (1 Co. 6:11). In hearing and believing the gospel of Christ, they were made "holy...by the washing with water through the word" (Ep. 5:26).[61] In accepting Christ, they also were endowed with the gift of his holiness that was transferred over to them (1 Co. 1:30).

At the same time, as with other aspects of salvation, Paul employs two tenses to describe sanctification. In one sense, sanctification is a work completed in the past, but in another sense it is an ongoing work in the present. As such, Paul can pray that God would sanctify the Thessalonians "through and through" (ὁλοτελεῖς = completely), a plea for the ongoing work of the Spirit in the lives of believers (1 Th. 5:23). Similarly, those who belong to Christ must turn away from wickedness, cleansing themselves of inappropriate behaviors, so they can be "made holy" (2 Ti. 2:21). Such a life of dedication "leads to holiness" (Ro. 6:19, 22). Further, they must avoid the sexual immorality that was so prevalent in the Greco-Roman world, living in a way that is "holy" (1 Th. 4:3-4). Hence, holiness is not only a gift but also, a calling (1 Th. 4:7; 1 Co. 1:2). It is both fact and demand. The sanctifying work of the Spirit is ongoing (2 Th. 2:13). Holiness is a quality that must be continually lived out (1 Ti. 2:15). It is the eschatological expectation of believers, in light of the return of Christ, that they will be "holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones" (1 Th. 3:13). Thus, it is appropriate to say that the

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[60] The perfect passive participle describes this act of sanctification as completed. Elsewhere, aorist verbs suggest the same past tense.

[61] It is likely that Paul here alludes to Christian baptism, not in the sense of baptismal regeneration, but in the sense that baptism symbolizes the inward reality of cleansing, cf. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Ephesians* (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1961), p. 116.

Christian "*both* lives in holiness *and* grows into holiness [emphasis his].[62]

Fundamental Structures

World View

Paul's view of the world, at least in so far as it can be determined from his letters, was essentially the Jewish view of the world based upon the Hebrew Bible. It goes without saying that he accepted the concepts of creation and monotheism. Though he was at home in the Greco-Roman world, he was not a Platonist, as was Philo, his Jewish contemporary. He did not derive his cosmology from the Hellenistic mystery religions.[63] At the same time, as a Pharisee he embraced aspects of theology, such as the existence of angels and the hope of resurrection, which were not shared by all schools of Jewish thought.

Some scholars have compared Paul's worldview to a three-storied universe consisting of the heavens (upper level), the earth (the middle level) and the underworld (the lowest level), and in fact, Paul uses language very much like this (Phil. 2:10; Ep. 1:10; Col. 1:16, 20). The heavens or "heavenlies" was the sphere of God, the exalted Christ, angels and spirit beings (Ro. 1:18; 10:6; 1 Co. 8:5; 2 Co. 11:14; 12:2; Ga. 1:8; Ep. 1:20; 2:2; 3:10; 4:10; 6:12). The earth was the world of humans (1 Co. 15:48-49; Col. 1:23). Under the earth was the realm of the dead (Ro. 10:7; Ep. 4:9; Phil. 2:10c). However, this viewpoint was more functional than ontological. Paul was concerned with self-conscious entities, not physical structures. What he thought about the universe in physical terms is simply not expressed in his writings. Instead, his emphasis is that humans are caught in a struggle between two opposing forces, the power of darkness and the kingdom of God (Ac. 26:18; Ro. 16:20; 2 Co. 2:11; 4:3-4; Ga. 1:4; Ep. 4:27; Col. 1:13; 2 Th. 3:2-3; 2 Ti. 2:26; 4:18). In the cross, Christ gained a decisive victory over the spiritual powers and authorities (Col. 2:15). Through Christ's victory, believers themselves are elevated so that in a spiritual sense they are now seated with Christ in the heavenlies (Ep. 1:3; 2:6). The same power that was effective in raising Christ from the realm of the dead is also available for those who believe (Ep. 1:19-21). Believers stand against the devil's schemes, armed with Christian weapons (Ep. 6:10-18; 2 Co. 6:7; 10:3-5; Ro. 13:12).

Anthropology

The anthropology of the Greco-Roman world, as derived from Platonic thought, was characterized by dualism. Humans were composed of a soul imprisoned

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[62] S. Porter, "Holiness, Sanctification," *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, ed. Hawthorne and Martin (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), p. 399.

[63] G. Ladd, pp. 360-363.

in a body. The soul, the true essence of humanness, was good, eternal and destined to pass into the invisible world of eternal reality at death. The material body, like all material things, was temporary and evil. Ultimate reality was the soul's escape from the body at death.

Did Paul adopt a Greco-Roman view of the soul-body dichotomy? To be sure, Paul certainly used the Greek terms ψυχή (***psyche*** = soul) and σῶμα (***soma*** = body), but there is every reason to believe that Paul took his anthropology from the Old Testament rather than Greek metaphysics. In the Hebrew Bible, the human person was a unity rather than a duality. At the creation of the first human, God formed the man from dirt and breathed into him life, thus creating a living soul (Ge. 2:7). It was not that the human *had* a living soul so much as the human *was* a living soul. The soul, at least in the Hebrew sense, refers to the whole self. The human has many parts, such as, flesh, spirit, heart, and so forth,[64] but these parts, while expressing both outward and inward aspects of the human constitution, are unified. The human body created by God was good, not evil, as in Greek dualism, just as the material world was God's good creation.

By the time one reaches the latter Old Testament writings and the intertestamental Jewish literature, the reality beyond death was viewed in terms of resurrection (e.g., Ps. 16:9-11; Is. 25:8; 26:19; Da. 12:2; 2 Maccabees 7:9, 14, 36; 12:43-45; 14:46; Testament of Benjamin 10:6-8). Resurrection, by its very nature, is incompatible with the Greek notion of the eternal soul's escape from a temporary material prison. While the doctrine of resurrection is not a major theme in the Hebrew Bible, the roots of the idea are sufficiently established so that in the Jewish Apocrypha, Apocalyptic and Pseudepigrapha, the concept develops considerably.[65] In the first century, it is well known, of course, that the Pharisees championed the resurrection of the dead in contrast to the Sadducees (cf. Mt. 22:23//Mk. 12:18//Lk. 20:27; Ac. 23:6-8).

So, what was Paul's anthropology? Christian interpreters have generally offered three models, dichotomy, trichotomy and unity. Dichotomy is the view that human nature has two fundamental parts, body and soul (e.g., Ro. 8:10; 1 Co. 5:5; 7:34; 2 Co. 7:1; Col. 2:5). Each part has independent existence, and each has a distinct origin. The soul or spirit (the two terms seem to be used interchangeably) is the immaterial part of the human person created in heaven and placed in the earthly body during gestation, causing it to become animated. It is the rational and moral side of human life. Thomas Aquinas developed this view in Roman Catholic doctrine, and

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[64] H. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, trans. M. Kohl (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), pp. 10-58.

[65] R. Muller, *ISBE* (1988) IV.146-147.

later many Reformed Protestants adopted it.[66] Trichotomy, on the other hand, views the human person as having three fundamental parts, body, soul and spirit (1 Th. 5:23; 1 Co. 15:44; cf. He. 4:12). Some of the early church fathers, such as Origen, adopted this view, and it has been championed by modern thinkers as well, such as the Chinese theologian Watchman Nee.[67]

Both dichotomy and trichotomy seem to owe too much to Greek metaphysics, and the early Christian writers appear to be influenced by Plato and Aristotle as much as by Paul.[68] It is much better to understand the human constitution in the Hebrew tradition, that is, as a unity. Paul uses a variety of terms for the human person, including heart, mind, body, conscience, flesh, spirit, bowels and soul. This multiplication of terms is a form of synecdoche (in which the part represents the whole), and Paul does not seem to divide these parts from each other with any consistency as though they are separate entities. Rather, together they all point toward human wholeness or totality or unity. All philosophical attempts to subdivide the human psychology in Paul's letters are doubtful.[69]

Creation and Re-creation

Paul describes the event of salvation as involving two creations, the old and the new. He uses three paradigms to illustrate these polarities, the original creation and the new creation, the old Adam and the Second Adam, and the present age and the coming age.

At the beginning, God created the universe through Christ, including all physical and spiritual entities (Col. 1:15-17; cf. Ro. 11:36; 1 Co. 8:6; 11:12; Ep. 3:9; Ac. 14:15; 17:24). The original creation was good (1 Ti. 4:3-5), for it reflected the essence of its Maker's power and deity (Ro. 1:20). Nevertheless, the original creation was marred by sin, and the process of death and decay began (Ro. 8:20-22). The sentence of death extended to humans as well (Ro. 8:23). Spiritual entities are now divided between those hostile to God (Ro. 8:38; Ep. 2:2; 4:27; 6:11; 1 Ti. 3:7) and those aligned with him (1 Co. 4:9; Ga. 3:19; 1 Ti. 5:21).[70] Paul does not speculate on how or when these spiritual entities rebelled against God. Still, humans are caught up in the struggle. Their minds are blinded to God's truth (2 Co. 4:4; Col. 1:13), and

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[66] W. Ward, *EDT* (1984) pp. 317-318; L. Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1933), p. 121-122; C. Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (rpt. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), II.42-47.

[67] W. Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968), 3 vols.

[68] W. Ward, *EDT* (1984) pp. 1111-1112.

[69] For a full exploration of the Pauline anthropological terms, see D. Guthrie, pp. 163-180.

[70] Hostile spiritual entities are denoted by several words in Paul, such as, "rulers," "authorities", "powers", "thrones", "lordships" and so forth, not to mention the "elements of the world" (Ga. 4:3, 9; Col. 2:8, 20), cf. G. Ladd, *Theology*, pp. 400-403.

Satan employs every strategy at his disposal to keep them out of God's kingdom (2 Co. 2:11; Ep. 6:11; 2 Ti. 2:26). The devil's cohorts masquerade as pagan gods (1 Co. 10:20-21), and he disguises himself as an angel of light (2 Co. 11:14).

An important aspect of the old creation is the fact that all humans are linked to Adam, the first human. "In Adam, all die," Paul says, by which he means that Adam stands at the head of the old creation, both temporally and causally (1 Co. 15:22a). Sin entered the world through this first human, and by him death became universal to the human experience (Ro. 5:12; cf. Ge. 3). Adam's transgression and judgment, because he was the head of the race, penetrated the whole race (Ro. 5:18). Death came even to those who did not sin as did Adam (Ro. 5:14). Hence, Paul sees a solidarity existing between the "one" and the "many." Adam is at once the first man and Everyman.[71] All humans are "in Adam" in the same sense that all humans are part of the human race. What Adam committed as the representative of the whole race produced a spiritual contagion that was and is passed on to each succeeding generation. Sin may not be a natural necessity, but it is a historical inevitability.[72] It should not be understood genetically so much as the spark that set the woods on fire. Thus, Paul can speak of the "old man" as the person who stands in solidarity with the ancient Adam (Ro. 6:6; Ep. 4:22; Col. 3:9).

Finally, the original creation and the original Adam (archetypes that include all humans) belong to the present αἰών (**aion** = age). There is both a present age and an age to come (Ep. 1:21). By the present age, Paul not only refers to an epoch in time, but also to the world order that characterizes the present epoch in time. The present age and its values exist in tension with God's will (Ro. 12:2; 1 Co. 1:20; 2:8; 3:18).[73] The wisdom of the present age is coming to nothing (1 Co. 2:6). The devil, the god of this present age, has blinded human hearts so they cannot see Christ (2 Co. 4:4; Ep. 2:2).

All three of these paradigms - the old and new creation, the old and new Adam, and the old and new ages - converge in Paul's description of the new era in Christ. First, the old creation waits expectantly for its emancipation from decay, a freedom that is inextricably tied to the emancipation of humans from sin (Ro. 8:19, 21-22). This freedom already has begun, since anyone who is "in Christ" is part of the new creation (2 Co. 5:17). In fact, the new creation is the only thing that really matters (Ga. 6:15)! The old self-typified by Adam, the first transgressor-is made new

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[71] The idea of corporate personality was a constituent part of Hebrew thought, cf. H. Robinson, *Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel* (rpt. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980).

[72] The whole subject of original sin is much broader than can be addressed here, but see D. Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), I.103ff.

[73] For readers of the English Bible, it should be noted that the Greek word αἰών frequently is translated by the English word "world."

in Christ so that a new self is possible after the ideal of righteousness and holiness that God intended (Ep. 4:22-24). This new self is the true image of God (Col. 3:9-10). The way forward is entirely due to a second Adam, the man Jesus Christ, who gives new life (1 Co. 15:22). Just as the first Adam brought sin and death through his disobedience, the second Adam brings righteousness and life (Ro. 5:15-19). The death of Jesus is the end of the old life, for when by faith one unites with Christ's death, the old man dies with Christ on the cross (Ro. 6:5-7; Ga. 2:20a; 5:24), and a new life is possible because of Christ's resurrection (Ro. 6:8-11; Ga. 2:20b). Similarly, the saving work of Christ is to deliver us from "the present evil age" (Ga. 1:4). Those who come to faith in Christ stand at the transition between the present and the future ages (1 Co. 10:11). In the coming ages, Christ will demonstrate universally the riches of his saving grace (Ep. 2:7; 3:21). Yet, the new age already has begun in Christ, for already the old age is passing away (1 Co. 7:31). In the meantime, believers stand as it were in both orders-both the old age in its decline and the new age in its rising. They continue to struggle against the dark powers of the present age as they await their final salvation (Ep. 6:12). Even though they are in the present age, in another sense they already have been transported to the heavenlies, where they sit with Christ (Ep. 1:3, 20-21; 2:6-7; 3:10-11). Hence, there is what many have come to call the "already/not yet" tension in the Christian life, that is, the overlapping of the present and future ages. The future age has already begun in Christ's death and resurrection (Ga. 1:4; 4:4), while the present age will soon end at Christ's second advent (Ro. 16:20).[74]

The People of God

Paul fully recognized God's choice of ancient Israel as the recipients of adoption, glory, covenant, law, priesthood, promises and the lineage of Messiah (Ro. 9:4-5). This choice was essentially corporate and functional. Israel was called to be God's holy people and to serve God in the world (Ex. 19:5-6). Divine election was not so much a choice for salvation as a choice for service. The election of the nation neither guaranteed continual blessing nor eternal salvation for all Israelites, as the subsequent history of the nation abundantly demonstrates.[75] To the Jews were committed the ancient oracles of God (Ro. 3:1-2). Gentiles, as outsiders, were aliens from this covenant community (Ep. 2:11-12).

At the same time, Paul points out that the true Israel must be understood in terms of faith, not merely ethnic origin (Ro. 2:28-29). God has discriminated even

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[74] For more extensive discussion, see D. Lewis, *Three Crucial Questions About the Last Days* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), pp. 61-68.

[75] For the corporate nature of election, see W. Klein, *The New Chosen People: A Corporate View of Election* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1990), pp. 25-44.

among Abraham's children (Ro. 9:6-11). This discrimination made possible the inclusion of Gentiles among the people of faith as well as the exclusion of those Jews who were not faithful (Ro. 9:23-33; 11:17, 24; cf. Ep. 2:11-3:6). Hence, it is Paul's contention that the true children of Abraham-the ones to whom the promise of salvation was made-are the people of faith, regardless of ethnic origin (Ga. 3:6-9, 14, 26-29). All who believe the gospel may be saved, both Jew and Gentile (Ro. 10:8-13). The new community of faith-those who believe in Christ-have become the true Israel of God (Ga. 6:16; Ro. 11:26-27). It is not that the Christian church has replaced Israel as God's people, but rather, that because of their faith in Christ they have been joined to God's people, or as Paul puts it, "grafted in" (Ro. 11:17ff.)

It is important to observe that Paul views the people of faith corporately as well as individually, a fact that is not sufficiently taken into account in much conservative Protestantism. He uses corporate metaphors, such as, the body of Christ (Ro. 12:4-5; 1 Co. 12:12-27; Ep. 2:13-16; 5:29-30; Col. 1:24; 2:19), the temple of God (1 Co. 3:10-11, 16-17; Ep. 2:20-22) and the bride (Ep. 5:23-24, 32; 2 Co. 11:2). Furthermore, Greco-Roman concepts of social identity are evident in church vocabulary, including the *politeia* or city community (Ep. 2:19; Phil. 3:20), the *oikonomia* or household community (Ro. 8:14-16; Ga. 4:1-7; Ep. 1:5), and the *koinonia* or voluntary association (1 Co. 1:9; 2 Co. 6:14-16; Ga. 2:9; Phil. 1:5). Since the whole church in any one city met rarely (Ro. 16:23; 1 Co. 14:23; 1 Th. 5:27), the house-based meetings of the various smaller units of Christians formed their own *oikonomia*.[76] Normally, a voluntary association under Greco-Roman law was not allowed to meet more frequently than once each month, but Judaism was granted an exemption in view of the weekly synagogue services. Christians, under the wing of Judaism, also managed to conduct weekly meetings without raising suspicion.[77]

Spheres of Power

In Paul's letters, he often describes the Christian life in terms of powerful tensions or polarities, each side of which exerts a pull on the believer. These spheres of power are very much related to the "already/not yet" tension arising from Paul's theology of creation and new creation. Because believers live in two worlds, the powerful forces of both attract them, and to a large degree, the Christian's own volition becomes a contributing factor as to which force is dominant.

Flesh and Spirit

One of the easiest subjects to misunderstand in Pauline theology is his flesh

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[76] D. Tidball, *The Social Context of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984), pp. 76-89.

[77] B. Winter, *After Paul Left Corinth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), p. 190.

and spirit polarity. A common misconception is that by "flesh" Paul refers to the human lower nature, and by "spirit" he refers to the higher nature.[78] To be sure, the Greek word σαρξ (***sarx*** = flesh) carries several nuances. At the simplest level, it refers to the fleshly material that covers the bones of a human or animal, and at times it can serve as a synonym for the body itself.[79] At other times, the word clearly has a more metaphorical meaning and approximates the mortality of humans. Translators who attempt to find dynamic equivalencies for this word in Paul offer two renderings, one that emphasizes the earthly, mortal nature of humans, and the other that seeks to make human flesh the locus of sin.[80]

There is no doubt that in Paul there is a connection between flesh and sin, but just what is that connection? Paul says, for instance, that in our former life "in the flesh" our sinful passions were aroused and expressed, bearing fruit toward death (Ro. 7:5). He offers a long litany of sins that he labels the "acts of the flesh" (Ga. 5:19). After coming to Christ, believers no longer live "according to the flesh" (Ro. 8:4) even though they live "in the flesh" (Ga. 2:20). Nevertheless, Paul's letters fall short of saying that the flesh is the actual locus of sin. Rather, he says that the flesh is the arena of human weakness, and because it is weak, it becomes the tool of sin (Ro. 8:3; cf. 7:11). Sin is successful because of the flesh's weakness. It is the field of force-the *weak* field of force-in which sin operates.

Paul's understanding of the flesh derives from the Hebrew tradition, where humans are a unity, rather than the Greek tradition, where humans are a dichotomy. Σαρξ, which follows the Hebrew בָּשָׂר (*basar* = flesh, body), is Paul's way of characterizing the human self in distinction from God (cf. Is. 31:3; 40:6-8; Je. 17:5, etc.).[81] Human beings are flesh, that is, they are transitory, mortal and finite. The flesh, in itself, is morally neutral. Of his own susceptibility to illness, Paul can say that this was a "weakness of the flesh" (Ga. 4:13; cf. 2 Co. 12:7). Of the normal troubles that all married couples face, Paul can say that these are "afflictions of the flesh" (1 Co. 7:28). Paul can speak of his "kinsmen according to the flesh" with no moral overtone (Ro. 9:3). He can speak of other people as creatures of "flesh and

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[78] This assumption seems to underlie the translation of σαρξ in the NIVs rendering of Paul's letters. Though most standard English versions use the more literal translation of "flesh" (so KJV, RSV, ASV, NAB, NASB, Williams), the NIV opts for a dynamic equivalency and consistently renders it as "sinful nature" some twenty-four times, all but two of which are in the Pauline corpus. In keeping with this assumption, it also translates σαρξ as "nature" on two additional occasions.

[79] *BAG* (1979), p. 743.

[80] Of this first kind, good examples are "natural self" (Knox), "earthly nature" (TCNT) and "human nature" (TEV). Of the second kind, good examples are "old sinful nature" (LB) and "sinful nature" (NIV). Translations that could be taken either way but tend toward the second kind include "unspiritual nature" (NEB), "unspiritual self" (JB), "lower nature" or "lower self" (Weymouth) and "carnal side of my being" (Phillips).

[81] Wolff, pp. 26-31.

blood" with no moral overtone (Ga. 1:16). He can even speak of Christ in his incarnation as descended from David "according to the flesh", but one should hardly wish to read that Christ was descended from David "according to the sinful nature" (Ro. 1:3; 9:5).[82] Hence, the flesh is the human self in all its powerlessness and limitation. In it, there is no power to do good (Ro. 7:18). In fleshly weakness, humans cannot please God (Ro. 8:8).

The opposite field of force is the realm of the Spirit, by which Paul means God's Holy Spirit.[83] The Spirit was the gift of the divine presence to believers (Ro. 8:15; 1 Co. 2:12; Ga. 3:2), an eschatological deposit in view of the things to come at Christ's return (Ro. 8:23; 2 Co. 1:22; 5:5; Ep. 1:13-14). It was not merely phenomenological, producing periodic ecstasy, but functional, serving as a working dynamic in the daily lives of believers (Ro. 8:1-2, 5, 9, 13, 26-27; Ga. 5:22-25; Ep. 3:16-17). The work of the Holy Spirit was relational, which is what Paul intends by his use of the verb "to dwell" or "to live" (Ro. 8:9, 11; 1 Co. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Co. 6:16; Ep. 3:17; 2 Ti. 1:14). Such language is not intended to be spatial, as though the Spirit were a gas. Rather, in keeping with his Hebrew tradition, Paul uses concrete expressions to describe abstract realities.

For Paul, a spiritual person is one who cooperates with the dynamic inward work of the Spirit to produce maturity and godliness (1 Co. 2:14-15; 14:37-38; Ga. 5:22-23; 6:1). In fact, it is to the point that Paul can say that the Corinthians did not lack any spiritual gift (1 Co. 1:7) but at the same time describe them as worldly (1 Co. 3:1, 3). Spiritual phenomena did not equal spiritual maturity!

The polarity between flesh and Spirit-between weakness and power-becomes a daily challenge to Christians. To live "after the flesh" is to live in weakness and the susceptibility toward sin (Ro. 7:5, 18-20; 8:4-9).[84] The appetites of the flesh are

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[82] In commenting on the NEB rendering of σαρξ as "lower nature," Leander Keck observes, "...this is precisely what Paul does *not* mean [emphasis his]. Whenever flesh is understood this way, one misconstrues Paul's dualism of flesh and Spirit as a struggle between the divine Spirit and our bodies, the locus of 'our lower nature,'" cf. L. Keck, *Paul and His Letters* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), pp. 105-106.

[83] Hence, most appearances of the word πνευμα (***pneuma*** = spirit) in the Pauline corpus are capitalized in English Versions, whether or not there is a qualifier such as "holy" as in Holy Spirit. Only a few instances are ambiguous (e.g., Ep. 5:18).

[84] Considerable discussion has attended Paul's treatment of flesh, Spirit, sin and law in Romans 7:14-25. All interpreters agree that in 7:7-13 Paul describes the unregenerate person, while in 8:1ff. he describes the regenerate person. Interpreters are divided, however, over 7:14-25. Some treat the passage as a continuing description of the unregenerate person, while others hold that the transition to the regenerate person occurs in 7:14 or 7:15. In the Greek text, there is a change in verbal tense at 7:14 so that the previous section (7:7-13) appears in the past tense (largely aorist) while the succeeding section (7:14-25) appears in the present tense. The Greek fathers generally followed the former interpretation, while Augustine and Calvin followed the latter, and modern interpreters are equally split. A detailed discussion is beyond the scope of this study, but here we shall assume the latter position, cf. J. Murray, *Epistle to the Romans [NICNT]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), pp. 256-273. Bruce is right in saying that 7:14-25 describes Paul (and through Paul all other Christians) as living in two worlds. Temporally, he lives in the present world, and so long as he relies on the weakness of the flesh, he suffers the reality of being "sold as a

markedly different than the desires of the Spirit. The Christian, who both lives in the flesh but who is indwelled by the Spirit, cannot satisfy the desires of both (Ga. 5:17). One or the other must have ascendancy. The difference between being "in the flesh" and "in the Spirit" is not the difference between a higher nature and a lower nature, but rather, the difference between the self, in its weakness, and Christ, in his strength. It is the inadequacy of the creature as opposed to the complete adequacy of the Lord. The Spirit is the power-sphere of the new creation and the new age, while the flesh is the power-sphere of the old creation and the old age. Paul's language of δύναμις (***dynamis*** = power) in this regard refers to being enabled by God to live above the weakness of the flesh by being filled with hope (Ro. 15:13; Ep. 1:18-19), wisdom (1 Co. 1:24), saving faith (1 Co. 1:17-18; 2:4-5), godliness (1 Co. 4:19-20), endurance (2 Co. 4:7-10; 12:9-10; 13:4; Col. 1:11) and love (Ep. 3:14-21).

Out of this tension between flesh and Spirit Paul offers his ethic of freedom. Christ has freed the believer from the power-sphere of sin that uses the weakness of the flesh as its tool (Ro. 8:2). He challenges the believer to fully live out this freedom (Ro.8:3-4; Ga. 5:13). Human volition plays a critical role in whether the believer exercises this freedom in order to rise above sin through Christ's empowerment or falls back into fleshly living through the inadequacy of self (Ro. 8:6-8; 1 Co. 3:1-4; 2 Co. 10:4). True spirituality, of course, is not simply a matter of will power, but rather, a dependence on Christ's power that gives freedom. Will power alone is only another expression of the flesh (Ro. 7:18b-20).

Sin and Righteousness

A second polarity that surfaces frequently in Paul's letters are the power spheres of sin and righteousness. Like the writing prophets of Israel, Paul sees sin as more than a broken rule; it is a broken relationship. The vocabulary of sin in Paul's letters includes a variety of words, the following of which are some of the most important:

- ἁμαρτία (***harmartia*** = sin, missing the mark)
- παράβασις (***parabasis*** = overstepping a boundary, violation, transgression)
- παρακοή (***parakoe*** = unwillingness to hear, disobedience)
- παράπτωμα (***paraptoma*** = false step, trespass, sin)

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slave to sin" (7:14b). At the same time, he has passed from death to life and lives in the inauguration of a new age characterized by the power of the resurrected Christ. Here he can pose the question, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?", and answer it immediately, "Thanks be to God-through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (7:24b-25). So long as Christians live between the old and the new, there will be tension, cf. F. Bruce, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans [TNTC]* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), pp. 150-153.

- αδικέω (***adiko*** = to do wrong)
- ἀνομία (***anomia*** = lawlessness, sin as a frame of mind)

Sin is the antithesis of faith (Ro. 14:23). It is both a transgression against others, but more importantly, a transgression against God or Christ (Ro. 3:23; 1 Co. 8:12). Sin is not only an act, it is a state. Humans not only sin, they are "in sin" or "under sin" (Ro. 3:9; 6:1; 1 Co. 15:17; Ga. 3:22; Ep. 2:1). Because sin is a state in which humans exist, Paul views sin in cosmic dimensions. It is a universal plight, including both Jews and Gentiles (Ro. 3:9-11, 19).

Furthermore, sin is a historical process. Unlike some oriental philosophies, Paul did not embrace an eternal duality between good and evil. Rather, sin became a sphere of power for humans at a particular time with the transgression of Adam, the prototype human (Ro. 5:12).[85] Humans were not created sinful, so sin is not a defect but a defection. Finally, sin is personified as the active agent that dominates weak humans (Ro. 7:8, 11; cf. 6:16-17). They are powerless to withstand it (Ro. 5:6).

The effect of sin is to bring humans under God's wrath (Ro. 1:18). Paul understands God's wrath in two ways, first as a judgment within history in which God gives humans over to the expression and consequence of their sins (Ro. 1:24, 26, 28), and second as an eternal consequence in which humans will be judged and the disobedient separated from God forever (Ac. 17:31; 24:25; Ro. 9:22; Phil. 3:19 ; 2 Th. 1:5-10). The death of Jesus was a substitutionary judgment of human sin (Ro. 5:8; 2 Co. 5:21). Death, the curse of the law against lawbreakers, was carried out against Christ when he became a curse in the place of others (Ga. 3:13). Hence, the judgment of death against humans for their sins was fulfilled in Christ's death at Calvary (Ga. 2:20; Col. 3:3).

Just as sin is a field of force, so also is righteousness. For Paul, righteousness is more than merely an attribute of God or a standard by which he judges humans. It is also God's saving action; it cannot be viewed only in a static sense. God's righteousness is revealed in his saving action (Ro. 1:16-17; 4:5). This saving action is an expression of divine justice, which reaches the helpless and puts them in a right

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[85] In classic Christian tradition, especially following Augustine, original sin has been understood to be the universal and hereditary sinfulness of humans since Adam. This universal sinfulness is often believed to be transferred genetically. In Roman Catholic theology, original sin includes the transfer of Adam's guilt to all humans, a guilt that can only be absolved in baptism (hence, infant baptism). Protestants, while clearly affirming the universality of sinfulness, have been less insistent on a genetic transfer as though sin were merely a matter of biology or physiology. Nevertheless, even though the mystery of universal sinfulness may be beyond precise description, they affirm the doctrine of total depravity. Total depravity means that humans are corrupt at the center of their being and every part of their being has been infected (mind, will, emotion, body, etc.). In this state, they are totally unable to return to God unless moved by his grace. All humans world-wide and throughout history have been infected with this depravity, cf. Bloesch, I.90ff.

relationship with God himself (Ro. 3:25-26).[86] In the end, righteousness is both God's saving activity (process) and the gift he gives to humans as he saves them (result), giving them right standing with God (Phil. 3:9; cf. Ro. 5:1-2).

Law and Grace/Faith

Yet one other polarity is important for understanding Paul's thought, the polarity of law and grace/faith. Most of Paul's many references to law occur in two letters, Romans and Galatians. It is fair to say that Paul uses the word law with more than one nuance. On the positive side, he certainly sees the law as the revelation of God's will. It is holy, righteous and good (Ro. 7:12-14, 16; 1 Ti. 1:8), and it defines sin (Ro. 3:20b; 5:20a; 7:7; 8:7; Ga. 3:19; 1 Ti. 1:9). In his ethical discussions, Paul has no hesitation in appealing to the Torah as a primary source of authority for God's expectations (Ro. 13:8-10; 1 Co. 9:8-10; 14:21, 34; Ga. 5:13-15; 1 Ti. 1:8).[87] At the same time, much of Paul's discussion concerning law, especially as the counterpart of grace/faith, comes in the sense of legalistic righteousness, that is, obedience to law as a way of securing right standing with God. It is this approach to law that Paul sees as totally inadequate, since it is a dependence upon "what the law was powerless to do" (Ro. 8:3).

Paul delimits the two power-spheres of law and grace with the preposition **ὑπο** (***hypo*** = under): a person either is "under law" or "under grace" (Ro. 6:14-15; cf. 3:19; 1 Co. 9:20; Ga. 5:18). One either relies on the law (Ro. 2:17; Ga. 3:10; 5:4) or relies on grace/faith (Ro. 3:28; 7:4, 6; Ga. 2:16, 19; 3:2, 5, 11; Phil. 3:9). By this description, Paul intends the way that humans seek to attain right standing before God. The problem with living "under law" as the means by which to be justified is that the law, in itself, cannot provide empowerment for obedience (Ro. 3:20; Ga. 2:21). The law defines what should be done or not done (Ga. 3:12), but it cannot offer the ability to live in righteousness. Hence, Paul says, "It is not those who hear the law.... but those who obey the law who will be declared righteous" (Ro. 2:13). The inability of law to provide the power of obedience lies behind Paul's description of the law as "the law of sin and death" (Ro. 8:2-3). It is not that the law is bad, but rather, that the empowerment to fully meet the righteous demands of the law lie in another realm (Ro. 8:4, 7; Ga. 3:21-22). Hence, to rely on the law or upon one's ability to keep the law as the means for right standing with God is futile. Such reliance leads only to the law's penalty for disobedience, which Paul describes as the "curse of the law" (Ga. 3:13). Christ has redeemed believers from being "under law"

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[86] It is to the point that the English words "righteousness" and "justice" in Paul's letters are derived from the same Greek word, δικαιοσύνη (***dikaiosyne*** = righteousness, justice).

[87] In fact, as 1 Co. 14:21 illustrates, Paul on occasion uses the word law to describes the Scriptures outside the Torah as well (cf. Is. 28:11-12).

(Ga. 4:5). Now, they are "under grace", where the empowerment for obedience comes from the Spirit (Ro. 8:2, 5-11; Ga. 5:16-18; 3:3).