

Acts, Paul and James

- I. **The Story So Far**
- II. Pentecost (Acts 1-2)
- III. Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-9; James)
- IV. The Ends of the Earth (Acts 10-28; Galatians; 1&2 Thessalonians)
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The New Testament and the Story So Far

- In Greg Beale's massive (and outstanding) *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old in the New*, he summarises the plotlines of the Old and New Testaments as follows
 - OT: "The Old Testament is the story of God, who progressively reestablishes his new-creational kingdom out of chaos over a sinful people by his word and Spirit through promise, covenant and redemption, resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this kingdom, and judgment (defeat or exile) for the unfaithful, to his glory."
 - NT: "Jesus's life, trials, death for sinners and especially resurrection by the Spirit have launched the fulfilment of the eschatological already-not yet new-creational reign, bestowed by grace through faith and resulting in worldwide commission to the faithful to advance this new-creational reign, and resulting in judgment for the unbelieving, unto the triune God's glory."
- Similarly, the opening paragraphs of Tom Schreiner's *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* explains the theology of the NT like this:
 - "The thesis advanced in this book is that New Testament theology is God-focused, Christ-centred and Spirit-saturated, but the work of the Father, Son and Spirit must be understood along a salvation-historical timeline; that is, God's promises are already fulfilled but not yet consummated in Christ Jesus. We will see that the ministry of Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit are fundamental for the fulfilling of God's promises. The coming of Jesus Christ and the work of the Spirit are the prime indications that God is beginning to fulfill the saving promises made to Abraham."
- And then Tom Wright, in his *The New Testament and the People of God*:
 - "First-century Jews looked forward to a public event, a great act of liberation for Israel, in and through which their god would reveal to all the world that he was not just a local, tribal deity, but the creator and sovereign of all. YHWH would reveal his salvation for Israel in the eyes of all the nations; the ends of the earth would see that he had vindicated his people. The early Christians, not least in the writings that came to be called the New Testament, looked back to an event in and through which, they claimed, Israel's god had done exactly that."

Where the Early Church Fits in the Biblical Story

Genesis 1-3	Genesis 4-11	Exodus – Deuteronomy	Joshua – 2 Chronicles	Ezra – John the Baptist	Matthew – Revelation 20	Revelation 21-22
First chaos of earth and waters	Chaos of earth and waters at the flood	Chaos of oppression & Egypt's plagues	Chaos of exile & wilderness for 2 nd generation	Chaos of oppression & destruction in land and exile	Chaos of oppression & destruction as "exile" continues	Chaos of last destruction of heavens and earth
First creation	New creation	Exodus & new creation through Red Sea	Exodus and new creation through Jordan	Exodus and new creation through return from exile	New creation in Christ's life, death and resurrection	Final, permanent, new creation
First commission of Adam for God's glory	Commission of Noah as new Adam for God's glory	Commission of Israel as corporate Adam for God's glory	Commission of Israel as corporate Adam restated	Commission of Israel as the eschatological corporate Adam	Commission of Christ as new Israel / new Adam for God's glory	Final, lasting commission of saints as a corporate Adam
Sin of Adam	Sin of Noah, the new Adam	Sin of Israel, the new Adam, with the golden calf & in wilderness	Repeated sin of Israel under judges and kings	Israel's sin in the land & forfeiture of eschatological role	Christ, as eschatological Israel and last Adam, resists sin	Final, lasting resistance to sin by the saints
First Adam's judgment and exile	Judgment and exile throughout earth at Babel	Judgment & exile in the wilderness for first generation	Judgment in the land & exile to Babylon	Judgment of continuing exile, despite Israel's return to the land	Continuing physical exile in the world, despite spiritual rescue	Final, lasting deliverance of the saints from exile

Source: G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 59-61

The Roman Empire in the New Testament Period



Israel / Palestine in the New Testament Period



The Eastern Mediterranean in the New Testament Period



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The Book of Acts in One Sentence

- As Acts begins, Luke makes it clear that this is the second part of his history, and that the first part dealt with “all that Jesus began to do and teach” (1:1). The clear implication is that he hasn’t finished doing and teaching!
- Luke then explains the forty days between the resurrection and the ascension (1:2-3), before reporting his instruction that his disciples remain in Jerusalem until they are baptised in the Holy Spirit (1:4-5)
- Then the disciples ask if now, finally, he will restore the kingdom to Israel
 - Jesus does not answer the question directly, but tells them that they do not need to know the times and seasons the Father has fixed
 - And then, in explaining what will happen next, he summarises the whole book of Acts: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (1:8)
- This sentence serves as a guide to the entire structure of the book
 - Receiving power from the Holy Spirit (chapter 2)
 - Being witnesses in Jerusalem (chapters 2-6)
 - Being witnesses in Judea and Samaria (chapters 6-9)
 - Being witnesses to the ends of the earth (chapters 10-28)
- It also indicates the now-and-not-yet of the kingdom
 - You will not know when the Father will finally establish the kingdom ...
 - ... but until he does, you will receive power, and will be witnesses to the King all over the earth

The Structure of Acts

Commission (Acts 1:8)	Section of Acts	Coming of the Spirit	Conclusion of the Section
"You will receive power, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem ..."	1:1–6:7	2:1-13 (on Jews)	"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly" (6:7)
"... and in all Judea and Samaria ..."	6:8-9:31	8:4-25 (on Samaritans)	"Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord" (9:31)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Gentiles)	9:32-12:24	10:44-48 (on Gentiles, but within Israel)	"But the word of God continued to increase and spread" (12:24)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Asia)	12:25-16:5	19:1-7 (on Gentiles, in Asia)	"So the churches were strengthened in the faith and grew daily in numbers" (16:5)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Europe)	16:6-19:20		"In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power" (19:20)
"... and to the ends of the earth" (Rome)	19:21-28:31		No conclusion – still ongoing!

Echoes of Isaiah in Acts 1:8

- Isaiah, more than any other OT writer, is the prophet of Israel's restoration. He prophesies the return from exile, the coming of the Spirit, the witness of God's people, and the gospel going to the ends of the earth
- Luke, particularly in Acts 1:8, uses Isaiah's language (in the LXX) to explain the power and purpose of the church
 - Isa 32:15: "Until the Spirit shall come upon you from on high, and Carmel shall be desert, and Carmel shall be counted for a forest."
 - Isa 43:10: "You be my witnesses, and I too am a witness, says the Lord God, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know, and believe."
 - Isa 43:12: "You are my witnesses, declares the Lord, and I am the Lord God." (cf. 44:8)
 - Isa 49:6: "I have given you ... for a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the end of the earth."
 - Acts 1:8a: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."
 - Luke 24:49: "And behold, I am sending forth the promise of my Father upon you, but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."
 - Luke 1:35: "The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.'"
 - Acts 1:8b: "And you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the end of the earth."
- When we read the Isaianic prophecies in context, it looks like Luke (with Jesus) is saying that Israel's restoration, and the breaking in of the promised new creation, is coming about through the pouring out of the Spirit upon the church for mission

Five Discussion Questions from Acts 1

- Five questions emerge in Acts 1:15 onwards, which are worth discussing briefly
- Three questions concern Judas. How did he die, why is the field called “Field of Blood”, and who bought it?
 - Acts 1:18: “Now this man acquired a field with the reward of his wickedness, and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the field was called in their own language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.”
 - Matt 27:5-8: “And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, “It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money.” So they took counsel and bought with them the potter’s field as a burial place for strangers. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day.”
- A fourth question is this: do apostles need to have witnessed the resurrection?
 - 1:21-25: “So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.”
- And there is also a question relating to the casting of lots:
 - 1:26: “And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.”
 - Should this be normal practice in the church? Why / why not?

Pentecost as Theophany (or “Appearance of God”)

What is the feast of Pentecost?

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place.

Where in the OT do we see mighty rushing winds?

What is the word for “wind” from heaven?

And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

When in the OT do we read of the “house” being “filled”?

God descends in fire in the OT. When? Why?

And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Who or what is filled with the Spirit in OT theophany? So what?

What kinds of languages? For what purpose? So what?

The Purpose of Pentecost

- It is very important to consider the *purpose* of Pentecost within the story of Acts
- Within Charismatic circles, it can easily be understood in terms of our own experience, and so in a limited way
 - One Charismatic writer puts it like this. "What does being baptised in the Spirit look like? Look in Acts 2 and we see exactly what it looks like. When I was 19 I knew I had been regenerated by the Spirit and knew the Spirit was with me and gave me insight into scripture and answered my prayers, but I had never had anything comparable to what happened on the day of Pentecost. When I was baptised in water at 15, I went down dry and came up drenched. Despite all I knew of the Lord, I was spiritually dry, and thirsty and I came to the Lord and asked him to baptise me in the Spirit like in Acts 2, and I can only describe it like being drenched. There were no tongues of fire, but I knew I was filled with the Spirit and I spoke in tongues and was filled with 'inexpressible and glorious joy'."
 - This is wonderful – but none of this fits with what the text of Acts actually says (even the “tongues” here are not earthly languages)
 - The original Pentecost experience comprised (a) mighty rushing wind, (b) divided tongues of fire, (c) comprehensible, unlearned, earthly languages, (d) declaring the mighty works of God
- In Acts, the purpose of Pentecost is much less to do with an individual experience of satisfaction in God (as valuable as that is), and much more to do with several other things
 - Demonstrating that the church is the eschatological temple of God, in which God now lives by his Spirit
 - Empowering the church to be witnesses to Jesus’ resurrection (as in 1:8) and to preach boldly
 - Marking the dawn of the new age, in which the Spirit is poured out on “all flesh” and “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord” is saved
 - Reversing the curse of Babel, and incorporating people from all over the world into one united community

The Purpose of Pentecost (cont.)

- Put differently, the gift of the Spirit, as Luke presents it at Pentecost, is
 - Eschatological – it demonstrates that the ends of the ages have come
 - Ecclesiological – it demonstrates that the church is now the temple of God's presence on earth
 - Evangelistic – it equips people to witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus
 - Ethical – it empowers people to live transformed lives as part of God's new creation
 - Ecumenical – it shows that the participants in God's kingdom are of all languages, ages, strata and sexes
 - Experiential – it makes the believer aware that all of these things have happened to them
- **DISCUSSION:** rank these in order of emphasis in your life / church / ministry
 - Where does your emphasis lie, and what do you neglect?
 - Where do you think Luke's emphasis lies?
 - If there is a difference, why do you think that is?
 - Is there anything that we can/should do about that?

The First Evangelistic Sermon (Acts 2:22-36)

**The Life, Death
and Resurrection
of Jesus**



**The Davidic King
Will be Raised
Incorruptible**



**The Promise to the
Davidic King Hasn't
Been Fulfilled**



**Jesus Was Raised,
Given the Spirit &
Poured Him Out**



**Therefore Jesus
is Both Lord and
Messiah**

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

For David says concerning him, "'I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

"Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.

This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.

For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, "'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.'" Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.'"

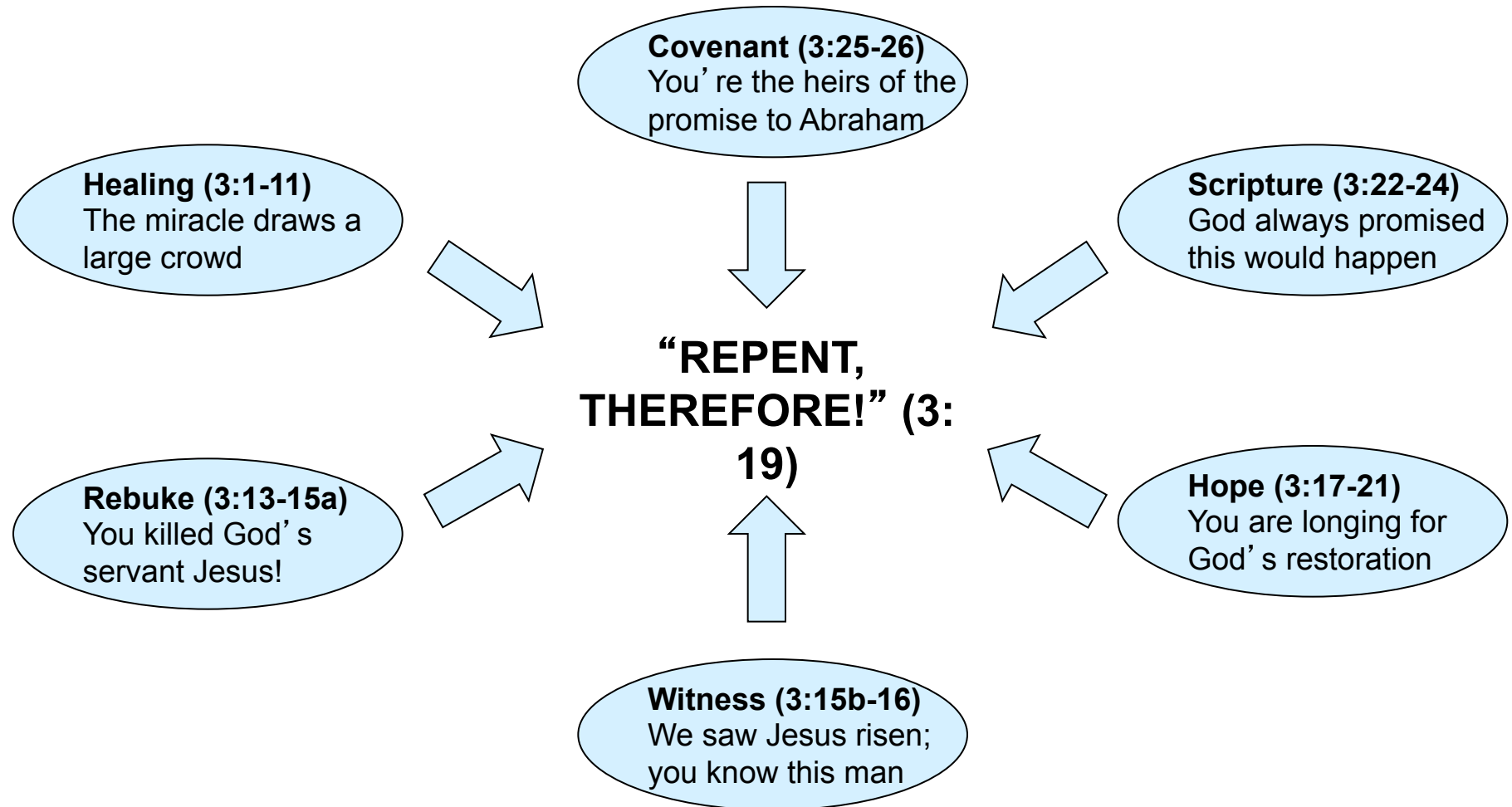
The Response to the Gospel

- A typical explanation of our response is often framed as the “Peter package”, based on Acts 2:38-39. Of these, the first two are essential for salvation, and the second two are not
 - Repent
 - Believe
 - Be baptised in water
 - Receive the Holy Spirit
- This is strange, because this is not what Peter says at all! Instead, he talks about two things we do, and two things God does. There is no indication that baptism is not essential, nor that the gift of the Spirit will come later
 - We repent
 - We get baptised in water
 - God forgives our sins
 - God gives us his Holy Spirit
- Then, in the last few verses of the chapter, we see what the life of the Spirit-filled community looked like (2:42-47)
 - Devoted to teaching
 - Devoted to “commonness”
 - Devoted to breaking bread
 - Devoted to prayer
 - Awe upon every soul
 - Many signs and wonders
 - Common possessions
 - Happiness and praise
 - Favour
 - Salvation on a daily basis

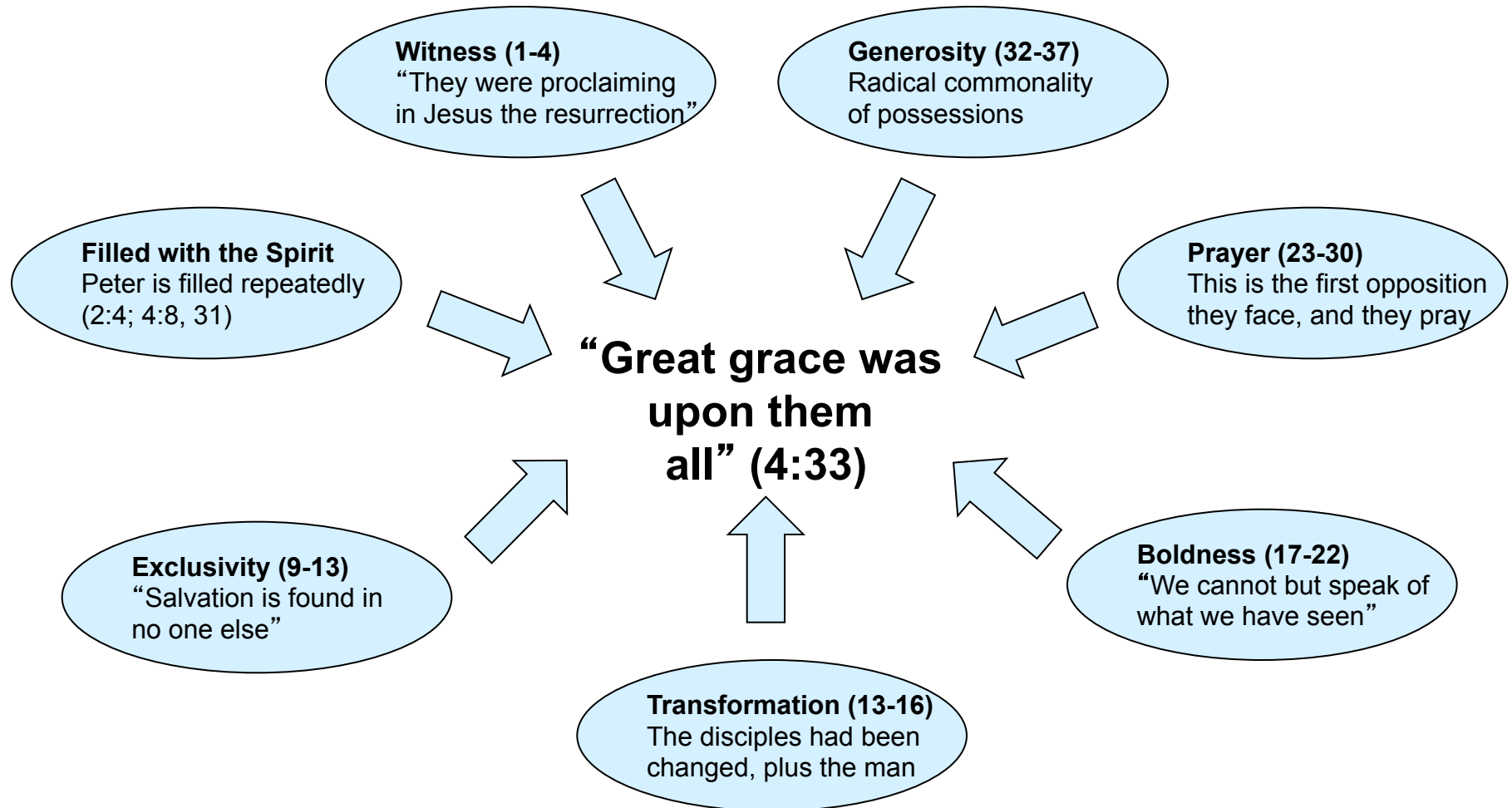
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Witness in Jerusalem: Ordinary People (Acts 3)



Witness in Jerusalem: Priests, Sadducees, Elders and Scribes (Acts 4)



Opposition and Conflict (Acts 5-7)

	INTERNAL	EXTERNAL
SEVERE	<p>Problem: <u>deceit</u>. Ananias and Sapphira, perhaps as a result of the honour given Barnabas, exaggerate their giving (5:1-10)</p> <p>Response: Peter is uncompromising, since they are lying to the Holy Spirit / God</p> <p>Result: great fear comes upon all who hear these things; signs & wonders continue</p>	<p>Problem: <u>false accusation & martyrdom</u>. Stephen is accused of blasphemy, and eventually stoned (6:8-8:1)</p> <p>Response: Stephen confronts the council, and even in his death worships Jesus</p> <p>Result: persecution intensifies, but those who are scattered preach the Word wherever they go</p>
MILD	<p>Problem: <u>division</u> between the Hellenists and the Hebrews in the daily distribution of food (6:1-7)</p> <p>Response: the apostles ask for seven men, full of the Spirit and wisdom, so they can keep preaching and praying</p> <p>Result: the number of disciples multiplies greatly, and lots of priests become obedient to the faith</p>	<p>Problem: <u>persecution</u>. The high priest arrests the apostles, has them beaten, and throws them in prison (5:17-42)</p> <p>Response: an angel breaks them out. The apostles stand firm: “we must obey God rather than men.” Gamaliel argues that opposing them is useless</p> <p>Result: the apostles rejoice in sufferings. They don’t stop preaching Jesus as Christ</p>

Stephen's Speech to the Sanhedrin (Acts 7)

- Stephen's extraordinary and brave sermon can be hard to read. It could sound like an unsorted ramble through the Old Testament
- But actually, it's a very deliberate comparison of the hand of God and the hands of men
 - The Jewish authorities were putting Stephen on trial for, apparently, speaking out against the temple in Jerusalem. They wanted to preserve the symbol of God's presence
 - But Stephen wanted to expose their hypocrisy. So he told the OT story, emphasising all the ways in which Israel had rejected God's work amongst them, because they wanted to control things themselves
 - He contrasts the hand of God – the God who promised a land to Abraham, brought Israel out of Egypt, spoke to them through the prophets, sent Jesus, and raised him from the dead ...
 - ... with the hands of men – human beings who build idols, try and constrain God within the walls of temples (or even churches?), and silence anyone who challenges them
 - From Stephen's point of view, the punchline of the sermon is in verses 48-53. "God doesn't live in houses made by human hands. In fact, his hand made everything. But you always resist what God is doing by his Spirit, don't you? God's hand has raised Jesus, and you're still trying to cling on to what your hands built!"
 - So they killed him. They used their human hands to cover their ears, and pick up rocks to throw at Stephen and silence him forever
- They failed, of course. Human hands always do, in the end. We're still reading Stephen's sermon today
 - And 2000 years later, the temple built by human hands is still a ruin – with a mosque on the top! – whereas Jesus, whom God's hand raised up, is the one who divides history into before and after

Philip's Evangelistic Ministry (Acts 8)

- Acts 8 is a rollercoaster of a chapter on evangelism. It is absolutely full of action
 - Scattering (8:1-3)
 - Evangelising and healing (8:4-13)
 - Receiving the Spirit (8:14-17)
 - Confronting Simon Magus (8:18-24)
 - Continuing to preach (8:25)
 - Bible studying and evangelising (8:26-35)
 - Baptising (8:36, 38)
 - Teleporting (8:39-40)
- What do you make of the fact that the Samaritans did not receive the Spirit when they believed and were baptised?



The Resurrection Appearance to Saul (Acts 9, 22, 26)

Acts 9:1-19	Acts 22:1-16	Acts 26:8-18
Saul ... went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.	I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers.	And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme ... In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.
Suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"	About noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'	At noon, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun. And I heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
"Who are you, Lord?" "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."	"Who are you, Lord?" And he said to me, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting. Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do."	'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and <u>stand upon your feet</u> , for <u>I have appeared to you</u> for this purpose, <u>to appoint you as a servant</u> and <u>witness</u> to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom <u>I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light</u> and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'
The Lord said to Ananias, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized.	Ananias came to me, and said, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. And he said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. And now why do you wait? <u>Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.</u> ' When was Saul's conversion? Why?	What sorts of OT stories do these phrases reflect? Why do you think that is?

The Epistle of James

- I. Address and Greeting (1:1)
- II. The Pursuit of Spiritual Wholeness: The Opportunity Afforded by Trials (1:2-18)
- III. The Evidence of Spiritual Wholeness: Obedience to the Word (1:29-2:26)
 - I. Hasty Speech and Anger Do Not Please God (1:19-20)
 - II. Obedience to the Word is the Mark of Genuine Christianity (1:21-27)
 - III. Discrimination Against the Poor Violates Kingdom Law (2:1-13)
 - IV. Saving Faith Reveals Itself in Works (2:14-26)
- IV. The Community Dimension of Spiritual Wholeness: Pure Speech and Peace (3:1-4:12)
 - I. Control of the Tongue Manifests the Transformed Heart (3:1-12)
 - II. True Wisdom Brings Peace (3:13-4:3)
 - III. Summons to Spiritual Wholeness (4:4-10)
 - IV. Critical Speech is a Presumptuous Violation of the Law (4:11-12)
- V. The Worldview of Spiritual Wholeness: Understanding Time and Eternity (4:13-5:11)
 - I. Arrogant Planning Ignores God's Providence (4:13-17)
 - II. Misusing Wealth and Power Brings God's Judgment (5:1-6)
 - III. Patiently Enduring Trials Earns God's Reward (5:7-11)
- VI. Concluding Exhortations (5:12-20)
 - I. Avoid Oaths (5:12)
 - II. Prayer and Healing (5:13-18)
 - III. A Concluding Summons to Action (5:19-20)

Justification is by Works, and Not by Faith Alone (James 2:24)

Word	How Does James Use and Illustrate It (James 2)?	How Does Paul Use and Illustrate It (Romans 3-4 etc)?
“Faith”		
“Works”		
“Justified”		



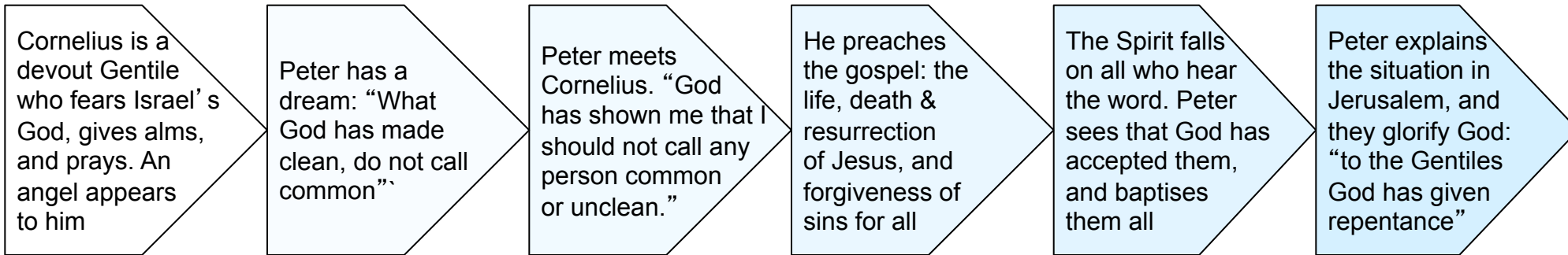
Should we, as Protestants, affirm “justification by faith alone”, even though it is explicitly denied in the New Testament?

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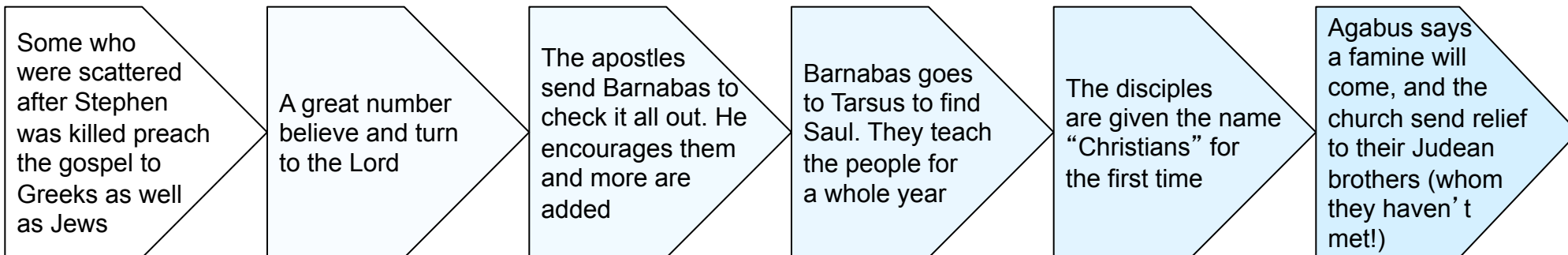
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The Gospel Reaches the Gentiles (Acts 10-11)

God-Fearing Gentiles in Caesarea (10:1-11:18)

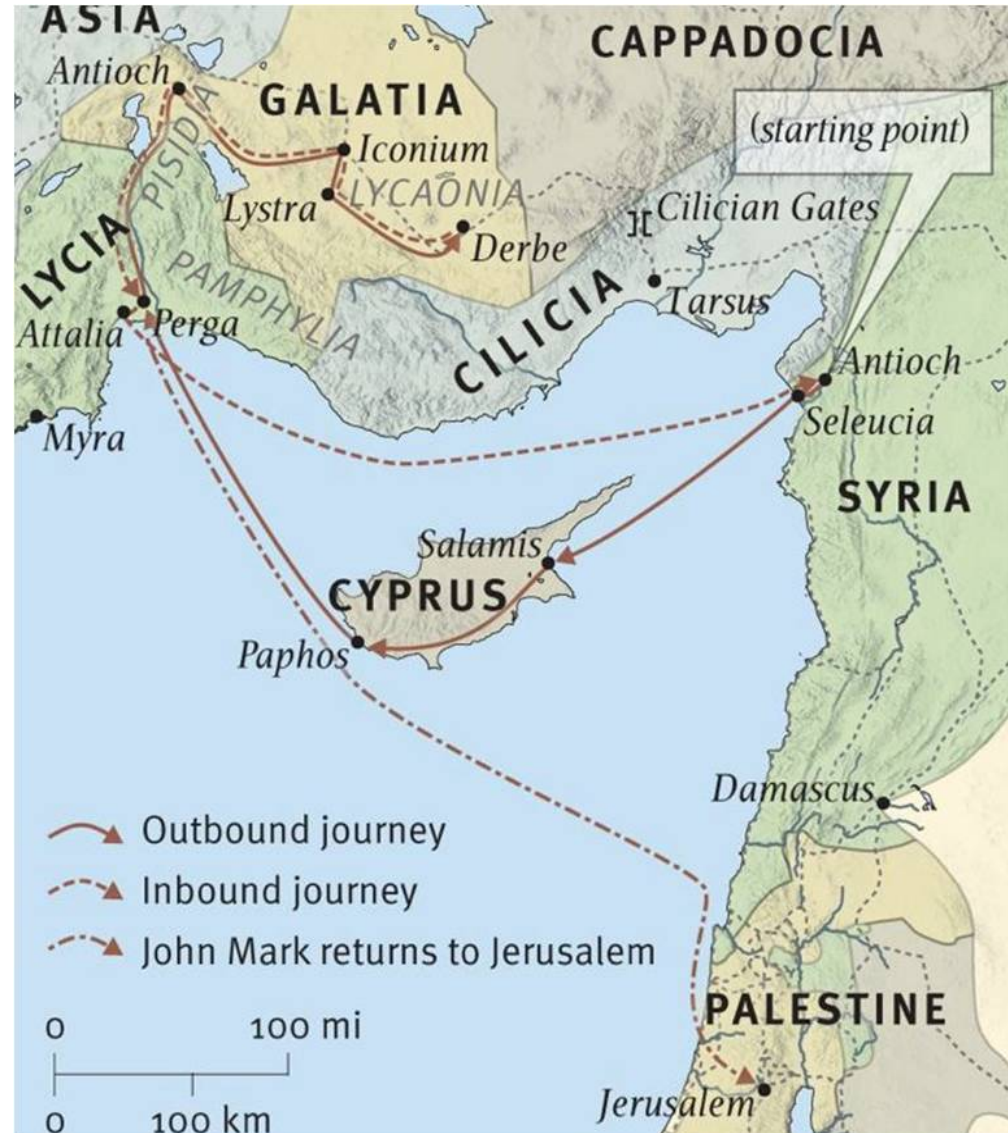


Random Gentiles in Antioch (11:19-30)



Paul's First Missionary Journey (Acts 13-14; AD 46-47)

- This is the first ever deliberate apostolic mission. Note:
 - The multiracial leadership team in Antioch, worshipping and fasting, and then hearing God clearly speak (13:1-3)
 - Paul's confrontation with Elymas on Cyprus (13:4-12)
 - John Mark's departure (13:13)
 - Preaching in Pisidian Antioch (13:14-43)
 - Paul and Barnabas' commission to the Gentiles, fulfilling Isaiah 49 (13:44-52)
 - "As many as were appointed to eternal life believed" (13:48)
 - Paul and Barnabas are first called apostles in Iconium (14:1-4; cf. v14)
 - Pagan worship in Lystra and Derbe, followed by stoning (14:5-20)
 - Encouragement of the churches, appointing elders, praying and fasting (14:21-23)
 - All of this is in Galatia!
 - Feedback in Antioch (14:24-28)



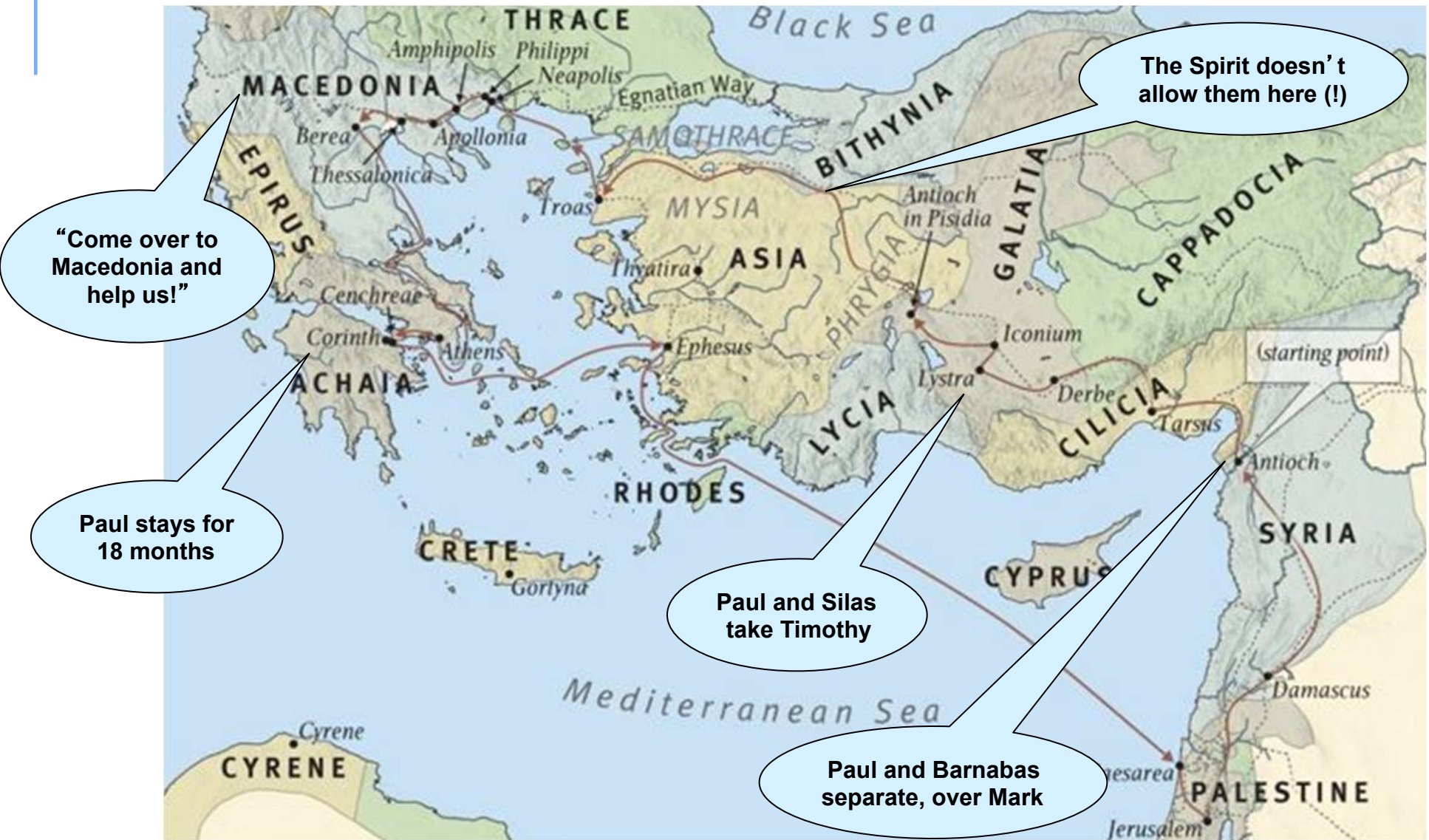
Galatians (AD 48)

- Tom Wright: Imagine you are a missionary in South Africa under apartheid, and you decide to build a mixed school in a rural community. You reckon the only way of breaking down the racial barriers in the nation is to have black and white and coloured children all learning together, so you build a school where they study, eat and play together. Then you leave town to go and do the same somewhere else. But some time later, you get word that the new governors of the school have decided that it is better for black, white and coloured children if they learn with people of their own colour – so they have built a wall down the centre of the building, created separate entrances for the different races, and given them separate classrooms, eating spaces and playgrounds. Imagine your anger. That is how Paul feels on writing Galatians.
- The Galatian problem is mainly about two things – circumcision (5:1-15) and table fellowship (2:11-14) – which reflect the conviction that Gentiles need to become like Jews if they are to be full members of God's people
- But Paul will have none of this
 - Because justification is by faith and not by works of the law (2:15-21)
 - Because the gift of the Spirit is by faith, for all nations, and not by works of the law for Jews only (3:1-14)
 - Because being in Christ is by faith, for all nations, and not by works of the law for Jews only (3:15-29)
 - Because we are now sons and not slaves (4:1-31)
 - Because righteous living comes through faith, love and the Spirit, not by works of the law (5:1-26)
 - Because forcing circumcision is about boasting, rather than about new creation (6:12-16)
- In that sense, Galatians is more about exclusivism than legalism

The Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15; AD 49)

- The Council of Jerusalem probably follows hot on the heels of the Galatian incident (although it is possible that Galatians was written later, around AD 55). In many ways, this is the centrepiece of the book of Acts
- The question is simple: do Gentiles have to become like Jews in order to inherit God's promises?
 - Obviously, there is plenty in the OT about the nations being taught God's law from Mt Zion and so on
 - But, as Peter explains (15:7-11), the gift of the Spirit has already been given to the Gentiles, which indicates that God has accepted them by grace
 - And, as James argues (15:13-18), the prophets also show that the Gentiles will seek the Lord and remain Gentiles (Amos 9:11-12)
- So without compromising on the inclusion of Gentiles, or on the grace of the gospel, the apostles and elders decide that the Jews need to accept the Gentiles as full members of God's people, but the Gentiles need to be sensitive to their Jewish brothers and sisters
 - They should abstain from things polluted by idols (see also 1 Cor 8-10) ...
 - ... and from sexual immorality ...
 - ... and from what has been strangled ...
 - ... and from blood
 - Note that the same list appears in 15:20, 15:29 and 21:25
- So: are you kosher? Why / why not?

Paul's Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:36-18:22; AD 49-51)



1&2 Thessalonians (AD 51)

- We could say a lot about the Thessalonian letters, but both of them include three major elements, which are introduced in 1 Thess 1:3
- Prayer and encouragement, for perseverance and faithful gospel preaching despite persecution (work of faith)
 - 1 Thess 1:1-10
 - 1 Thess 2:13-3:13
 - 2 Thess 1:1-12
- The importance of clarity on eschatology (steadfastness of hope)
 - 1 Thess 4:13-5:11
 - 2 Thess 2:1-17
- The Thessalonians should imitate the apostles' example of courage, diligence and generosity (labour of love)
 - 1 Thess 2:1-12
 - 1 Thess 4:1-12
 - 2 Thess 3:1-18

Paul's Third Missionary Journey (Acts 18:22-21:17; AD 52-57)



Paul's Trials (Acts 21:18-28:31)



Acts, Paul and James

- I. The Story So Far
- II. Pentecost (Acts 1-2)
- III. Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-9; James)
- IV. The Ends of the Earth (Acts 10-28; Galatians; 1&2 Thessalonians)
- V. Romans**
- VI. 1&2 Corinthians
- VII. The Prison Letters

A Typical Reformed Approach to Romans

- I. The Gospel as the Revelation of God's Righteousness (1:1-17)
- II. God's Righteousness in his Wrath against Sinners (1:18-3:20)
- III. The Saving Righteousness of God (3:21-4:25)
- IV. Hope as a Result of Righteousness by Faith (5:1-8:39)
- V. God's Righteousness to Israel and the Gentiles (9:1-11:36)
- VI. God's Righteousness in Everyday Life (12:1-15:13)
- VII. The Extension of God's Righteousness through the Pauline Mission (15:14-16:23)
- VIII. Final Summary of the Gospel of God's Righteousness (16:25-27)

Impartial Righteousness and the Missionary Reading

- Thematically, Romans is all about the righteousness of God revealed through the gospel
 - Key statement of purpose: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’ “ (1:16-17)
 - Central paragraph: “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” (3:21-26)
- And the purpose of Romans seems to have a lot to do with Paul’s mission to all nations, particularly to Spain
 - Opening sentence: “through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations” (1:5)
 - Statement of intention (1:13-15), especially, “I am indebted to Barbarians and Greeks” (Spain would have been a Barbarian nation, from the Romans’ point of view – he is urging them to missionary partnership)
 - Punchline (15:7-13)
 - Closing sentence: “Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith” (16:25-26)
- What’s the connection? What links God’s righteousness, and the way it is presented in Romans, to the Spanish mission?

A Rhetorical, Missionary Reading of Romans

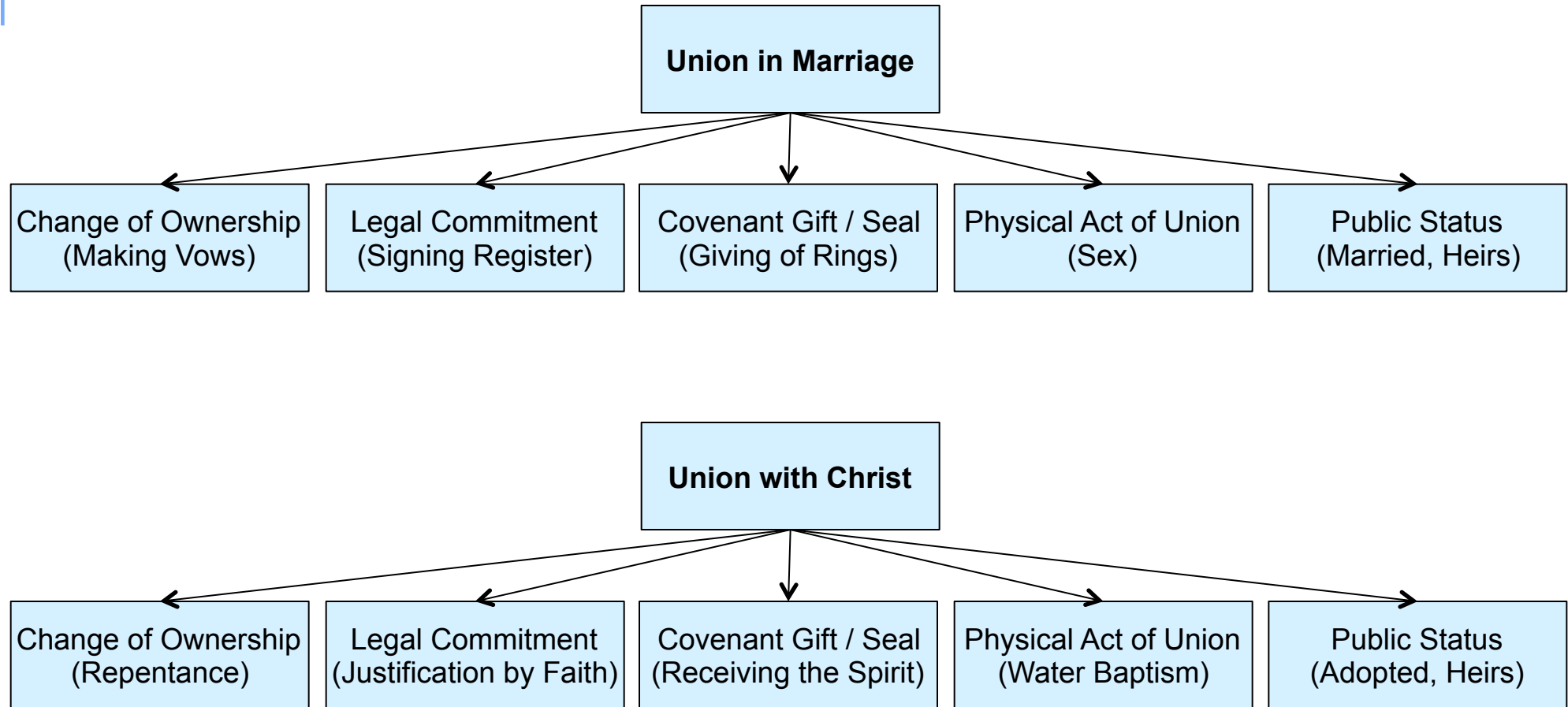
- I. The *Exordium* (“Introduction”) (1:1-12)
- II. The *Narratio* (“Statement of Facts”): The Background of Paul’s Missionary Project (1:13-15)
- III. The *Propositio* (“Basic Contention”): The Thesis about the Gospel as the Powerful Embodiment of the Righteousness of God (1:16-17)
- IV. The *Probatio* (“Proof”): Four Proofs of the Thesis and Its Implications (1:18-15:13)
 - I. First Proof: The Gospel Expresses the Impartial Righteousness of God by Overturning Claims of Cultural Superiority and by Rightwising Jews and Greeks through Grace Alone (1:18-4:25)
 - II. Second Proof: Life in Christ as a New System of Honour That Replaces the Quest for Status through Conformity to the Law (5:1-8:39)
 - III. Third Proof: The Triumph of Divine Righteousness in the Gospel’s Mission to Israel and the Gentiles (9:1-11:36)
 - IV. Fourth Proof: Living Together according to the Gospel so as to Sustain the Hope of Global Transformation (12:1-15:13)
- V. The *Peroratio* (“Conclusion”): An Appeal for Cooperation in Missionary Activities in Jerusalem, Rome and Spain (15:14-16:24)

Source: Robert Jewett, *Romans*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007)

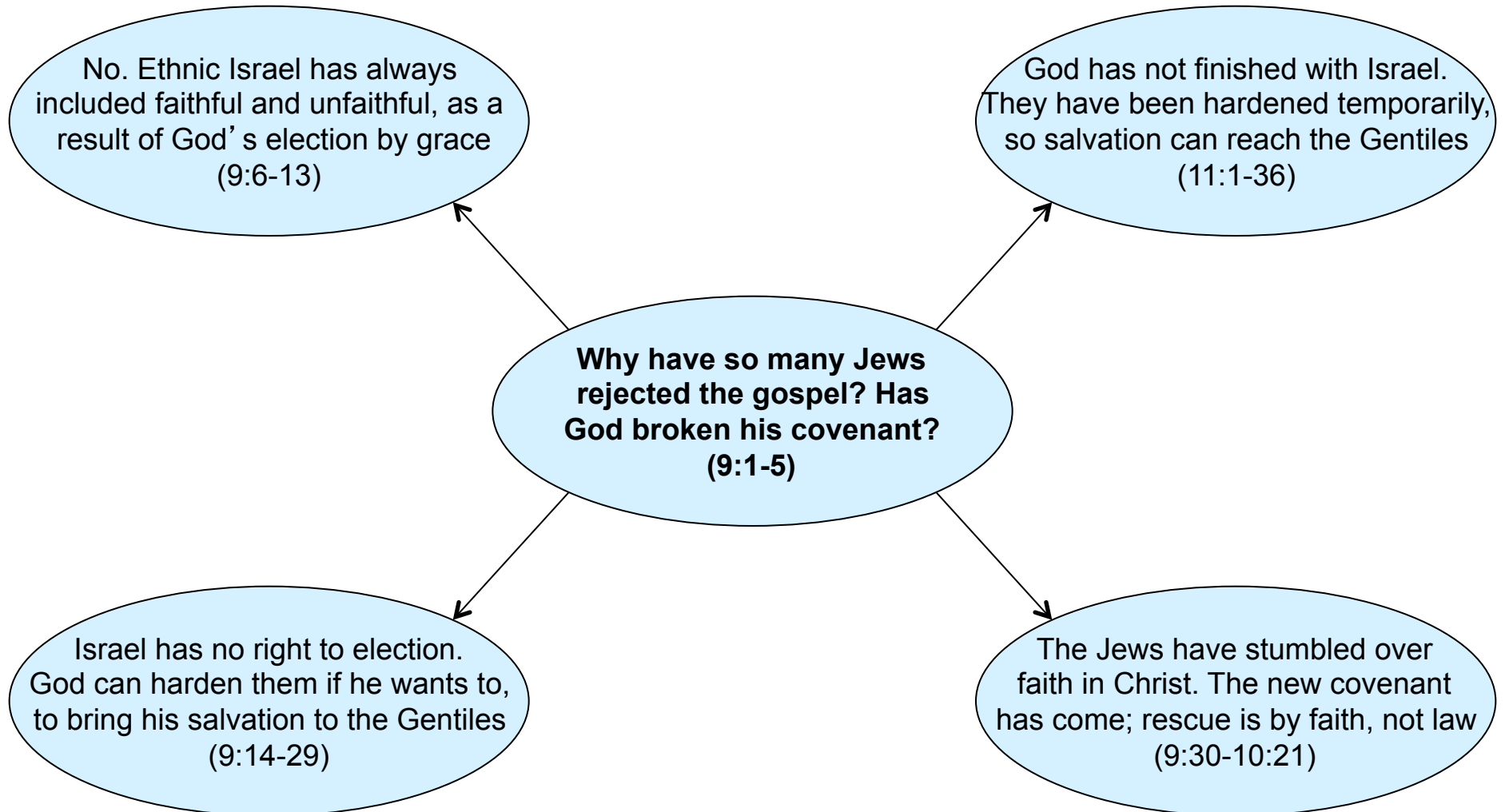
Justification by Faith and Judgment According to Works (Romans 1-4)

- How do we fit together Romans 2:1-16 and Romans 3:21-4:25? How do we fit together the ideas that (1) we are justified by faith and not works of the law, and (2) the doers of the law will be justified? In one of several ways
 - Being justified by works is only a hypothetical possibility. If we were perfect, we could be justified by works, but we're not, so we can't
 - Paul emphasises justification by faith sometimes, and judgment by works at other times, according to his rhetorical purpose. They can't finally be harmonised in a clear way
 - Judgment according to works is about the distribution of rewards to believers on the basis of their whole lives, and has nothing to do with their eternal salvation
 - Final justification is in accordance with works, and that verdict is brought into the present by means of faith in Jesus. Union with Christ, and the power of the Spirit, mean that believers live lives of good works, and thus God's judgment of us is seen to be just

The Centrality of Union With Christ (Romans 5-8)



The Temporary Hardening of Israel (Romans 9-11)



Law and Gospel (Romans 12-15)

- The Protestant view of law and gospel, at least at a street level, has often gone like this:
 - First the law, which is of works, and needs to be earned by human effort ...
 - ... and then the gospel, which is of grace, and is freely given by God
- The biblical picture, however, is more like this:
 - God makes a covenant, of grace, in which he aims to bless people (I will bless the earth through your seed, I will make you a kingdom of priests, etc) ...
 - ... and as part of the covenant, he requires obedience and faithfulness (circumcision, Sabbath-keeping, food laws, etc)
- The gospel is not really very different, is it?
 - God creates a new covenant, of grace, in which sins are forgiven and people are reconciled to him ...
 - ... and as part of that covenant, he requires obedience and faithfulness (Rom 1:5; 16:26)
- Christianity contains commands (especially in Romans 12-15!)
 - Love one another. Show hospitality. Do not have sex with someone you're not married to. Don't avenge yourselves. Be compassionate. Give generously. Rejoice. Associate with the poor and lowly
 - Put your brother's preferences before yours. Partner in mission to Spain. And so on
- So how do we square these commands, or rules, with Paul's statement in 6:14 that you are "not under law but under grace"?

Acts, Paul and James

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- VI. 1&2 Corinthians**
- VII. The Prison Letters

God: Trinity and Attributes

- The Corinthian letters have some fascinating statements about the Son and the Spirit, which have been hugely important in discussions about the Trinity across the centuries.
- **EXERCISE:** Form a doctrine of the Trinity from just the following
 - “You are Christ's, and Christ is God's” (1 Cor 3:23)
 - “Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist” (1 Cor 8:4-6)
 - “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor 11:3)
 - “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone” (1 Cor 12:4-6)
 - “When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor 15:28)
 - “And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee” (2 Cor 1:21-22)
 - “Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor 3:17-18)
 - “God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor 4:6)
 - “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Cor 13:14)

Gospel: Problem and Solution (2 Cor 5:11-21)

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

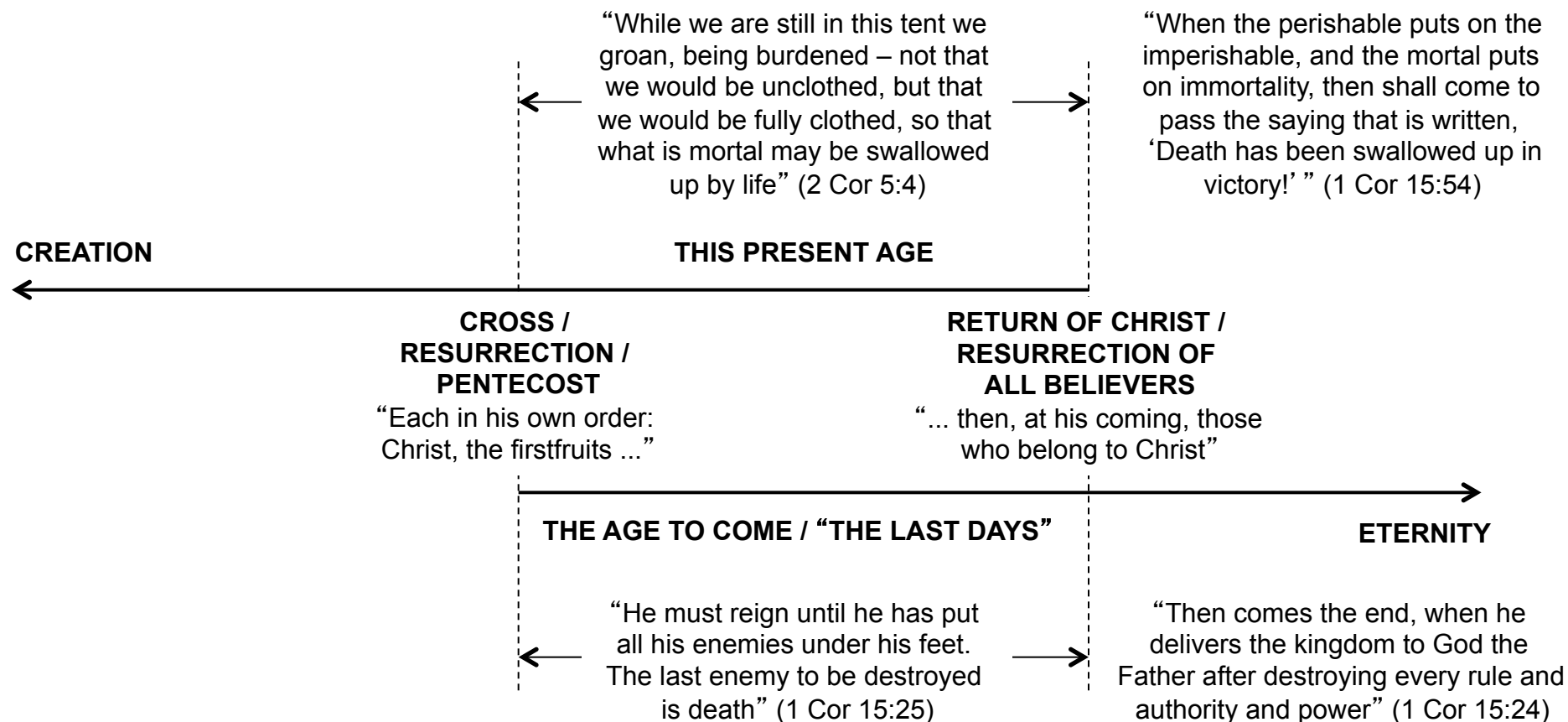
Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

People: Community and Ethics

- The Corinthian letters make it abundantly clear that the church is the temple of God's Spirit, and that all believers have been united together by the Spirit
 - We are the temple of God's Spirit, corporately (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16)
 - Our bodies are temples of God's Spirit, individually (1 Cor 6:19)
 - Nobody can say "Jesus is Lord" without the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3)
 - All of us have been baptised in one Spirit into one body, and given one Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:13)
- This, in turn, grounds all sorts of ethical instructions, many of which have strong warnings associated with them
 - Unity and division (1 Cor 1-4). "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him"
 - Sexual immorality (1 Cor 5; 6:9-20). "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God"
 - Litigation (1 Cor 6:1-11). "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God"
 - Marriage, divorce and remarriage (1 Cor 7)
 - Food offered to idols (1 Cor 8-10). "Do not destroy your brother, for whom Christ died"
 - Men and women in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35). "We do not have any other practice"
 - The Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34). "When you come together, it is not for the better but for the worse"
 - Spiritual gifts in meetings (1 Cor 12-14)
 - Not being yoked to unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-18)
 - Generous giving (2 Cor 8-9)
 - Responding to apostolic ministry (1 Cor 4; 2 Cor 10-13)

Mission: Kingdom and Eschatology



Acts, Paul and James

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God: Trinity and Attributes

- Paul's Christology reaches its highest expression in the Prison Letters (Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon), on top of the Trinitarian formulations we find in Ephesians (1:11-14, 17; 2:18, 22; 3:14-17; 4:1-6)
 - Php 2:5-11: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." [What OT text is this adapting? Why does it matter?]
 - Eph 3:14-21: "For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen."
 - Col 1:15-20: "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."
 - Col 2:8-10: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority."

Gospel: Problem and Solution

Eph 1:3-14

Chosen in Christ
Predestined for adoption through Christ
Blessed in Christ
Redeemed in Christ
All things to be united in Christ
Obtained an inheritance in Christ
Sealed with the Holy Spirit in Christ

Eph 2:1-22

Made alive together with Christ
Seated in heavenly places in & with Christ
Shown immeasurable kindness in Christ
Created in Christ for good works
Gentiles brought near in Christ
Built together into God's temple in Christ

Php 3:7-14

Found in Christ, having a righteousness
that comes through faith in Christ, in order
to know him, suffer with him, become like
him, and share in his resurrection
Called upwards in Christ

ἐν Χριστῷ
“In Christ”

Col 1:11-29

Redeemed and forgiven in Christ
All things held together in Christ
Fullness of God pleased to dwell in Christ
[Christ in you, the hope of glory]
Everyone to be presented mature in Christ

Col 2:11-15

Circumcised in Christ, without hands
Buried and raised with Christ in baptism
Made alive together with Christ
Triumphed over rulers & authorities in Christ

People: Community and Ethics

Community: the *Haustafeln* (Eph 5:21-6:9; Col 3:18-4:1; cf. Phm 8-21)

- Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ
 - Wives, submit to and respect your husbands, as the church submits to Christ
 - Husbands, love, nourish and cherish your wives, as Christ loves the church
 - Children, obey and honour your parents
 - Fathers, discipline and instruct your children, and do not provoke them to anger
 - Slaves, obey your masters sincerely and diligently, serving them as the Lord
 - Masters, do the same to them (!), stop your threatening, and treat them justly & fairly
- Philemon: take Onesimus back, “no longer as a slave, but more than a slave, as a beloved brother”
 - Receive him as you would receive me. Charge it to me. You owe me your life!

Ethics: Be Who You Now Are (Eph 4:1-5:21; Php 2:1-18; Col 3:1-17)

- Unity, humility & maturity: work out your salvation
 - Have this mind, which is yours in Jesus. Look to the interests of others, not just yours
 - Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
- Put off your old self, and put on your new self
 - Truth without falsehood, anger without sin, work without stealing, talk without corruption, kindness and forgiveness without malice
 - Imitate God and walk in love: not in sexual immorality, greed, idolatry or filthiness (for such people do not inherit the kingdom), but in light, with wisdom, pleasing the Lord
 - Put on compassion, humility, patience, since you are all one in Christ: Greeks, Jews, etc
- Do not grieve the Holy Spirit. And do not be drunk on wine, but be filled with the Spirit

Mission: Kingdom and Eschatology

Missional and Eschatological Tensions in the Prison Letters

You have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col 3:1-4)	← <i>Are we dead to sin, or do we need to kill it?</i> →	Put to death, therefore, whatever is earthly in you (Col 3:5-10)
The Spirit is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance (Eph 1:13-14)	← <i>Is our future secure, or contingent on something?</i> →	You will be holy & blameless, if indeed you continue in the faith (Col 1:23)
For this I toil, struggling ... (Col 1:29a)	← <i>Are we, or is God, maturing believers?</i> →	... with all his energy that so powerfully works within me (Col 1:29b)
Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Php 2:12)	← <i>Are we, or is God, working out our salvation?</i> →	Because it is God who works in you, both to will and to work (Php 2:13)
To die is gain. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better (Php 1:21-3)	← <i>Is death a cause of joy, or sorrow?</i> →	If Epaphroditus had died, I would have had sorrow upon sorrow (Php 2:27)
Christ cancelled our debts completely at the cross (Col 2:13-15)	← <i>Is the work of Christ complete, or not?</i> (cf. Php 2:30) →	In my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions (Col 1:24)
All rulers & authorities are disarmed, and under Christ's feet (Col 2:10-15; Eph 1:20-23)	← <i>Is the battle against the powers won, or ongoing?</i> →	You need to stand firm, wrestle with principalities & powers, and take up the armour of God (Eph 6:10-20)
Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour ... (Php 3:20)	← <i>Is our future in heaven, or with bodies on earth?</i> →	... who will transform our bodies to be like his glorious body (Php 3:20-1)

A Final Note: Paul and his Prayers

- In his outstanding *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and his Prayers*, D A Carson studies the Pauline prayers in detail, and shows (surprisingly, at least to me) how different they often are to our prayers
- They are well worth a study – so long as you combine your study with praying yourself! – whether with Carson’s book as a guide, or independently. The ones he lists are:
 - Rom 1:8-10
 - Rom 10:1
 - Rom 12:12
 - Rom 15:5-6
 - Rom 15:13
 - Rom 15:30-33
 - 1 Cor 1:4-9
 - 1 Cor 16:23
 - 2 Cor 1:3-7
 - 2 Cor 2:14-16
 - 2 Cor 9:12-15
 - 2 Cor 12:7-9
 - 2 Cor 13:7-9
 - Gal 6:18
 - Eph 1:3ff
 - Eph 1:15-23
 - Eph 3:14-21
 - Eph 6:19-20
 - Php 1:3-6
 - Php 1:9-11
 - Php 4:6-7
 - Php 4:23
 - Col 1:3-14
 - Col 4:2-4
 - 1 Thess 1:2-3
 - 1 Thess 2:13-16
 - 1 Thess 3:9-13
 - 1 Thess 5:23-24
 - 1 Thess 5:28
 - 2 Thess 1:3ff
 - 2 Thess 1:11-12
 - 2 Thess 2:16-17
 - 2 Thess 3:2-5
 - 2 Thess 3:16
 - 1 Tim 1:12
 - 1 Tim 2:1ff
 - 2 Tim 1:3-7
 - 2 Tim 1:16-18
 - 2 Tim 4:22
 - Titus 3:15b
 - Phm 4-7
 - Phm 25