

LESSON 6 The Church Reaches Out

In Lesson 5, we studied the book of Acts and the epistles associated with the early period of the church—James and Galatians. Our study helped us see the overall progress of the gospel message throughout the Roman Empire and how both Jews and Gentiles became part of the church. It also helped us understand the message of consistent Christian living that James presented to the first Jewish believers and the truth concerning the basis of salvation that Paul explained to the Galatians.

In this lesson, we will consider the letters associated with the church during the years after the Jerusalem Council when Paul made his second and third missionary journeys. We will examine the background of these letters and see how Paul responded to the needs of the new congregations that formed as the church reached into Macedonia, Achaia, and Italy.

We will discover that those early believers had many of the same difficulties we experience. Some of them were confused about the second coming of Christ. Others were torn by divisions among themselves. Still others needed to become mature in their Christian faith and understand more about what it meant to believe in Christ. Through Paul's letters, we will see how God provided guidance and instruction for believers with these various needs.

Lesson Outline

- A. First and Second Thessalonians: Letters to Macedonia
- B. First and Second Corinthians: Letters to Achaia
- C. Romans: Letter to Rome

Lesson Objectives

When you finish this lesson, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the historical background and content of the epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.
2. Discuss the historical background and content of the epistles of 1 and 2 Corinthians.
3. Describe the teaching and historical setting of the epistle to the Romans.

Learning Activities

1. Study the lesson development and complete each exercise. Compare your answers with those given and correct any that are wrong.
2. Read Paul's letters to the Thessalonians, Corinthians, and Romans. On the maps given in Lesson 5, find the cities to which these letters were sent and any other places that are mentioned in the lesson or in your Bible reading.
3. Answer the questions given on the self-test after you have finished the lesson and reviewed it.

Key Words

end-time

justification

Travel Epistles

joint-heir

sanctification

The epistles that were written during Paul's second and third missionary journeys include 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Romans and are often called the "Travel Epistles." These letters reveal the circumstances and problems of the believers to whom Paul wrote.

A. FIRST AND SECOND THESSALONIANS: LETTERS TO MACEDONIA

Objective 1. *Discuss the historical background and content of the epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians.*

The area of Macedonia included the cities of Philippi and Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a seaport as well as a center of trade. During Paul's lifetime, its population may have been close to 200,000.

Historical Background

Sometime after the Jerusalem Council, Paul set out on his second missionary journey, taking Silas with him (Acts 15:36, 40). Timothy joined them in Lystra (Acts 16:1–3), and Luke traveled with them from Troas to Philippi, where he apparently remained (Acts 16:10–40).

After a time of ministry in Philippi, Paul went on to Thessalonica, where he gained many converts. These included some Jews, several prominent women, and a large number of Gentiles. Paul had to leave Thessalonica by night. He stayed for a while in Berea and eventually arrived in Athens (Acts 17:10–15). Timothy remained in Berea and rejoined Paul in Athens later. From there, Paul sent him to visit the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 3:1–5). After this, Paul left Athens and continued on to Corinth, where he ministered for more than a year and a half (Acts 18:11).

While Paul was in Corinth, Timothy brought news of the church in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:6). In response to this news, Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians. It appears that he received additional information soon after and wrote 2 Thessalonians as a result (2 Thessalonians 2:2; 3:11).

CONTENT AND OUTLINES

In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul responded to the report and the information he had received about them. We see that they were undergoing persecution and were confused about the second coming of Christ, for both letters refer to these subjects.

Though both letters have similar themes, there are differences in their content. The first letter has a full review of Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians; the second simply has a few references. The first letter explains what will happen to those who have already died in Christ; the second describes the "man of lawlessness" who will appear before the Day of the Lord comes. The first letter contains a general warning against those who are idle; the second says that those who are idle should be avoided as well as warned. Together, both letters represent the teaching that was especially needed by this group of people who had misunderstandings about the Lord's coming and were only recently converted from paganism (1 Thessalonians 1:9). They are the first letters in which Paul discussed end-time events. Read through them, using the following outline to guide you.

FIRST THESSALONIANS: THE HOPE OF CHRIST'S COMING

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving. *Read 1:1–10.*
- II. Review of Paul's Ministry. *Read 2:1–16.*
- III. Paul's Desire to Visit the Thessalonians. *Read 2:17–3:5.*
- IV. Report of Timothy. *Read 3:6–13.*
- V. Instructions about Christian Living. *Read 4:1–12.*
- VI. Truths about the Lord's Coming. *Read 4:13–5:11.*
- VII. Final Exhortations. *Read 5:12–28.*

Application

- 1** Circle the letter before each correct completion. The epistle of 1 Thessalonians
- a)** was written when Paul was in Athens.
 - b)** tells what will happen to those who have died in Christ.
 - c)** shows that some of the Thessalonians were leading idle lives.
 - d)** describes the “man of lawlessness” who will appear before the Lord returns.
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SECOND THESSALONIANS: THE VICTORY OF CHRIST’S COMING

- I. Thanksgiving and Prayer. *Read 1:1–12.*
- II. Events Surrounding the Day of the Lord. *Read 2:1–12.*
- III. Exhortation to Steadfastness. *Read 2:13–17.*
- IV. Request and Command. *Read 3:1–15.*
- V. Closing Remarks. *Read 3:16–18.*

Application

- 2** Circle the letter before each correct completion. The epistle of 2 Thessalonians
- a)** says that the Lord Jesus will destroy the “man of lawlessness.”
 - b)** was probably written sometime during Paul’s third missionary journey.
 - c)** contains a specific reference to the report Timothy brought to Paul about the Thessalonians.
 - d)** presents Paul as an example for the Thessalonians to follow regarding working for their daily food.
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B. FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS: LETTERS TO ACHAIA

Objective 2. *Discuss the historical background and content of the epistles of 1 and 2 Corinthians.*

The cities of Corinth and Athens were located in the area of Achaia. Corinth had been destroyed in 146 BC but was rebuilt by the Romans in 44 BC. It became the capital city of the province of Achaia, and in New Testament times it was wealthy and prosperous. It was also idolatrous and immoral, for its inhabitants worshipped many gods and had a reputation for leading corrupt lives.

Background and Content of 1 Corinthians

We have previously said that Paul ministered in Corinth for more than a year and a half (Acts 18:1–18). It was at this time that the Corinthian church was founded. After this, Paul returned to Antioch, and later he set out on his third missionary journey (Acts 18:23).

Paul's third journey took him to Ephesus, where he remained for more than two years (Acts 19:8–10). While he was there, he received reports about the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:11; 5:1; 11:18) and a letter from them containing several questions (1 Corinthians 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, 12). He may have written an earlier letter as well in response to a previous report (1 Corinthians 5:9). The reports and the letter showed that the Corinthians needed strong teaching about moral standards and other important Christian values. Paul then wrote 1 Corinthians, and he replied to each problem that was raised, explaining the spiritual principle that related to it.

The content of 1 Corinthians can be divided into two basic sections. In the first part, chapters 1–6, Paul dealt with the problems he learned about from the report brought to him by those who were of "Chloe's household" (1 Corinthians 1:11). In the second part, chapters 7–16, he answered the various questions that the Corinthians wrote to him about. The letter is informal in tone. It is as if Paul were having a conversation with

the Corinthians. He asked questions (1:20, 4:7). He pleaded (4:14–16). He warned (4:18–21). He rebuked (5:2, 6). He taught (12:1–6). In all of this, he sought to emphasize the fact that Christ must be Lord in every area of a Christian’s private and public life.

Application

- 3** Complete the following sentences in your notebook.
- a)** Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while he was in . . .
 - b)** When Paul responded to the problems of the Corinthians, he sought to emphasize the fact that Christ must be . . .
 - c)** In chapters 1–6 of 1 Corinthians, Paul dealt with . . .
 - d)** In chapters 7–16 of 1 Corinthians, Paul answered . . .



First Corinthians covers a wide variety of topics. Read through it, using the following outline as a general guide to its content.

FIRST CORINTHIANS: PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

- I. Introduction. *Read 1:1–9.*
- II. The Solution to Divisions. *Read 1:10–4:21.*
- III. The Need for Discipline. *Read 5:1–6:20.*
- IV. Counsel Regarding Marriage. *Read 7:1–40.*
- V. Proper Use of Freedom. *Read 8:1–10:33.*
- VI. Behavior in Public Worship. *Read 11:1–14:40.*
- VII. The Gospel and Its Power. *Read 15:1–58.*
- VIII. Concluding Remarks. *Read 16:1–24.*

Application

- 4** First Corinthians shows that Paul applied certain spiritual principles to the problems the Corinthians had. Match the problem (right) to each principle Paul applied to it (left). The chapters are given where the principle is applied.
- ... **a)** The church is God’s building. (3)
 - ... **b)** Saints will one day judge angels and the world. (6)
 - ... **c)** The bodies of believers are members of Christ. (6)
 - ... **d)** The Lord’s Supper is a declaration of His death. (11)
 - ... **e)** The body of Christ is one with many parts. (12)
- 1) Divisions in the church
 - 2) Improper behavior at the Lord’s Supper
 - 3) Public lawsuits between believers
 - 4) Sexual immorality



Background and Content of 2 Corinthians

While Paul was still in Ephesus, he may have visited the Corinthians to deal personally with the problems he wrote to them about in 1 Corinthians. He seems to refer to such a visit in 2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:14, 21; and 13:1–2. If he did, apparently he was not well received. The church was still torn by rival groups, and there was strong opposition to Paul by some false apostles (2 Corinthians 10:7; 11:13). It may be that the letter he referred to in 2 Corinthians 2:3–4, 9 and 7:8–12 is one that he wrote to them after this second visit.

Paul left Ephesus and sent Titus ahead to bring back another report from Corinth. He then proceeded to Troas. Not finding Titus in Troas as he expected, he went on to Macedonia, still deeply concerned about the Corinthians. While he was there, Titus arrived with his report. It showed that there had been a change for the better in Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:6–16), although some were still opposed to Paul. This news formed the background for Paul’s writing of 2 Corinthians. He explained

his situation (1:3–2:4), asked the Corinthians to be reconciled to him (6:11–13), rejoiced over the good report he had received (7:6–7), and made a defense of his apostleship (10:1–13:10). He also wrote about the collection for needy brothers in which the Corinthians were participating (8:1–9:15).

This letter is perhaps the most personal of all of Paul’s correspondence. Because of the malicious opposition he received from certain people, it was necessary for him to defend himself and his ministry. Otherwise, not only he but also the gospel would be discredited. The letter does not recount the exact accusations. However, we may infer what they were by studying what Paul wrote in response. He used phrases like “so many” (2 Corinthians 2:17), “some people” (3:1; 10:2), “some say” (10:10), and “such people” (11:13) to refer to those who opposed him.

Application

5 Below are some passages in 2 Corinthians in which Paul evidently replied to certain accusations. Read each passage (right) and match it to the kind of accusation to which it would be an appropriate reply (left).

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| ... a) “Paul is proud and boastful” | 1) 3:1–6; 11:5;
12:11–12 |
| ... b) “Paul has no authority or letter of recommendation.” | 2) 10:12–18
3) 11:7–15 |
| ... c) “If Paul were a real apostle, he would have the church support him.” | |
| ... d) “Paul’s apostleship is of an inferior kind.” | |

Now read through the entire epistle, using the following outline as a general guide to its contents.

SECOND CORINTHIANS: A DEFENSE OF TRUE MINISTRY

- I. Greeting. *Read 1:1–2.*
- II. The Motives of Paul’s Ministry. *Read 1:3–2:13.*
- III. The Character of Paul’s Ministry. *Read 2:14–7:16.*
- IV. The Collection for Needy Believers. *Read 8:1–9:15.*
- V. The Authenticity of Paul’s Apostleship. *Read 10:1–13:10.*
- VI. Conclusion. *Read 13:11–14.*

Application

- 6** Circle the letter before each true statement. If the statement is false, rewrite it in your notebook so that it is true.
- a)** Second Corinthians was written after Paul received an encouraging report about the Corinthians from Titus.
- b)** The main topic of 2 Corinthians is the second coming of Christ.
- c)** The epistle of 2 Corinthians shows that Paul found it necessary to defend his ministry because false brothers and sisters were saying things about him that were untrue.



Both Corinthian letters demonstrate how Paul dealt with a group of people who were immature and often hostile to him. They always seemed ready to doubt his character and disregard his work among them. In spite of their attitude and lack of spirituality, however, Paul continued to care for them, expressing his deep love and concern (2 Corinthians 12:14–15).

The letters to the Corinthians reveal that many of the early Christians had serious problems. The existence of these problems is not remarkable, though. What is remarkable is that the church not only survived but also grew steadily in spite of them. This is a testimony to the truth that the church is not simply a human organization but rather the supernatural body of Christ, brought into being, sustained, and led forward by God in the person of the Holy Spirit.

C. ROMANS: LETTER TO ROME

Objective 3. *Describe the teaching and historical setting of the epistle to the Romans.*

The apostle Paul directed this letter to all Christians in Rome, the great capital city of the Roman Empire. This letter is perhaps Paul's most important work, for in it he gave a full explanation of God's method and provision of salvation for all humanity. It is profound in its teaching and clear in its application. It is worthy of careful, thorough attention.

Historical Background

As a result of the good report Titus brought about the Corinthians, Paul sent them 2 Corinthians, then resumed his third missionary journey southward. It is likely that he visited Corinth again and wrote to the Romans while he was there, since he had already made plans to go to Rome (Acts 19:21). He sent his letter to the Romans by way of Phoebe, a deaconess in the church of Cenchrea, a city close to Corinth (Romans 16:1–2). At the time Paul wrote, the church in Rome had existed for some time already, for its reputation was widespread (Romans 1:8). It had probably been started by Christians who settled there. Paul knew many of the believers by name, and some were relatives (Romans 16:3–15).

From the contents of Romans, it appears that Paul had several reasons for writing it. He hoped that the Roman Christians would help him carry out a mission to Spain (Romans 15:23–24). In addition, he was concerned that they understand the full meaning of the gospel and not be led astray by false teachers (16:17–19). This concern led him to give them a full presentation of the message of Christ, since he was not able to teach them in person.

Application

- 7** (Circle each right answer.) When Paul wrote to the Romans, he was
- a)** living in Jerusalem.
 - b)** planning to visit them eventually.
 - c)** traveling on his second missionary journey.
 - d)** probably visiting the Corinthians for the third time.
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Content and Outline

Romans is a reasoned presentation of the heart of the apostle Paul's teaching about the gospel. In this respect, it is unlike several of his other epistles, which were written to correct certain specific errors of belief and conduct. To the universal problem of sin, Romans gives the eternal solution of God's righteousness as revealed in Christ. Its arguments are persuasive, and its style is forceful and logical. It contains several of the most important truths about salvation, including those of justification (set forth in ch. 3:21–5:21) and sanctification (taught in ch. 6:1–8:39). The theme of the book can be found in Romans 1:16:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Paul followed this theme throughout his epistle as he explained the truths about God's righteousness step by step. Read Paul's letter to the Romans, using the following outline to guide you.

ROMANS: THE REVELATION OF GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

- I. The Need for God's Righteousness. *Read 1:1–3:20.*
- II. The Provision of God's Righteousness. *Read 3:21–5:21.*
- III. The Results of God's Righteousness. *Read 6:1–8:39.*
- IV. The Triumph of God's Righteousness. *Read 9:1–11:36.*

V. The Application of God's Righteousness.

*Read 12:1–16:27.***Application**

- 8** The following exercise will help you remember some of the important truths taught in the book of Romans. Fourteen of these truths are stated in the following list, one for each chapter of the book of Romans from 1 through 14. In your notebook, copy the headings of the chart, listing chapters 1–14, one chapter on each line. Next, review each chapter. Then select the sentence that states a truth specifically taught in that chapter and write it opposite the number of the chapter.

TRUTHS TAUGHT IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS	
<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Statement of Truth Taught</i>
1	The heathen are guilty of sin.

- a) Israel will be restored after the full number of the Gentiles has come to be saved.
- b) We are to avoid doing things that cause others to stumble.
- c) The heathen are guilty of sin.
- d) Abraham was justified by faith, and so are we.
- e) We must obey the governmental authorities that exist.
- f) We need to offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices.
- g) All people stand condemned as sinners.
- h) The nation of Israel disobeyed and rejected God.
- i) Adam's sin brought death, but Christ's act of righteousness brought life.
- j) We are free from condemnation and joint-heirs with Christ.
- k) We are dead to sin but alive to God.
- l) God chose to have mercy on Israel.
- m) The Jews are guilty of sin.
- n) We have been set free from the Law to serve God by the Spirit.



The teachings of the book of Romans have challenged Christians ever since they were written. They lift believers out of the depths of guilt and condemnation (Romans 3:23) to the heights of future glory in Christ (8:18–21) and guide them into practical ways of expressing God’s love in daily life (12:9–21). I hope that its message will become part of your life.

Application

- 9 Review the historical backgrounds of the epistles you have studied in this lesson. Then copy the following headings in your notebook and write each event listed under the heading that tells when it occurred.

EVENTS IN PAUL’S MINISTRY	
<i>Second Missionary Journey</i>	<i>Third Missionary Journey</i>

- a) Paul founded the church in Thessalonica.
- b) Paul founded the church in Corinth.
- c) Paul received news from Timothy about the Thessalonians.
- d) Paul received news about the Corinthians.
- e) Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.
- f) Paul wrote to the Corinthians.
- g) Paul wrote to the Romans.



After Paul left Corinth, he concluded his ministry in Achaia and Macedonia, said goodbye to the Ephesian elders in Miletus, and eventually arrived in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17–19). At the close of Paul’s third missionary journey, congregations of believers had been established in Galatia, Asia, Macedonia, and Achaia, as well as in other places. The church had grown from a small group of believers in Jerusalem into an army of thousands in cities all over the Mediterranean region. When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, though, his circumstances changed. He was arrested and had to continue his ministry not as a free man traveling where he willed but as a prisoner, confined and kept under guard first in Jerusalem, then in Caesarea, and finally in Rome.

Self-Test

1 MATCHING. Match the epistle (right) with the title of its outline as given in this lesson and each fact about its historical background and content (left).

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| a) Title: The Revelation of God's Righteousness | 1) 1 Thessalonians |
| b) Replies to several accusations made against Paul by false apostles | 2) 2 Thessalonians |
| c) Title: The Victory of Christ's Coming | 3) 1 Corinthians |
| d) Written to believers in a city Paul had not visited | 4) 2 Corinthians |
| e) Contains three chapters on the subject of love and the spiritual gifts | 5) Romans |
| f) Presents a defense of Paul's ministry as its main subject | |
| g) Describes what the "man of lawlessness" will do before Christ returns | |
| h) Title: A Defense of True Ministry | |
| i) Devotes three chapters to explaining how Israel is related to God's plan of salvation | |
| j) Title: The Hope of Christ's Coming | |
| k) Tells what will happen to those who have died "in Christ" | |
| l) Title: Principles of Christian Conduct | |
| m) Replies to several specific questions written in a letter to Paul | |

2 SHORT ANSWER. Following are descriptions of each of the groups of believers to whom Paul wrote the letters you have studied in this lesson. In the space following each description, write the name of the city in which the believers lived.

a) These believers had rival groups within their congregation. Certain people among them made false statements about Paul and his ministry.

.....

b) Some of these believers were alarmed because they heard a report that the Day of the Lord had already come. Certain ones did not work and led idle, unproductive lives.

.....

c) The faith of these believers was widely known. When Paul wrote to them, he expressed a hope that they would help him undertake a mission trip to Spain.

.....

d) These believers did not behave properly when observing the Lord's Supper. Their times of worship were disorderly also. They needed to change their conduct in both of these kinds of meetings.

.....

3 FILL-IN. Choose the phrase that correctly completes the statement from the two given in parentheses and write it on the space provided.

a) Most of the book of Romans is devoted to Paul's teaching about the

.....
 (second coming of Christ) (gospel of God's righteousness)

b) The letters to the Thessalonians refer to the problem some of them had with

.....
 (idleness) (disorderly times of public worship)

c) First Corinthians is the letter devoted mainly to Paul's response to

.....
 (specific church problems) (attacks on his ministry)

d) One reason Paul wrote to the Romans was because he

.....
 (had been unable to go and teach them personally)
 (wanted to reply to a letter they had sent him)

e) First Corinthians gives one whole chapter to Paul's teaching about the

.....
 (future of Israel) (resurrection of the dead)

Answers to Application Questions

- 5** **a)** 2) 10:12–18
b) 1) 3:1–6; 11:5; 12:11–12
c) 3) 11:7–15
d) 1) 3:1–6; 11:5; 12:11–12
- 1** **b)** tells what will happen to those who have died in Christ.
c) shows that some of the Thessalonians were leading idle lives.
- 6** **a)** True
b) False. The main topic of 2 Corinthians is Paul’s defense of his ministry.
c) True
- 2** **a)** says that the Lord Jesus will destroy the “man of lawlessness.”
d) presents Paul as an example for the Thessalonians to follow regarding working for their daily food.
- 7** **b)** planning to visit them eventually.
d) probably visiting the Corinthians for the third time.
- 3** (Your answers should be similar.)
a) Ephesus.
b) Lord in every aspect of a Christian’s private and public life.
c) the problems he learned about by the report of Chloe’s household.
d) the questions the Corinthians had asked him in their letter.
- 4** **a)** 1) Divisions in the church (3:1–9)
b) 3) Public lawsuits between believers (6:1–6)
c) 4) Sexual immorality (6:12–17)
d) 2) Improper behavior at the Lord’s Supper (11:17–32)
e) 1) Divisions in the church (12:12–26)

8 Your chart should look like this:

TRUTHS TAUGHT IN THE BOOK OF ROMANS	
Chapter	Statement of Truth Taught
1	c) The heathen are guilty of sin.
2	m) The Jews are guilty of sin.
3	g) All people stand condemned as sinners.
4	d) Abraham was justified by faith, and so are we.
5	i) Adam's sin brought death, but Christ's act of righteousness brought life.
6	k) We are dead to sin but alive to God.
7	n) We have been set free from the Law to serve God by the Spirit.
8	j) We are free from condemnation and joint-heirs with Christ.
9	l) God chose to have mercy on Israel.
10	h) The nation of Israel disobeyed and rejected God.
11	a) Israel will be restored after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.
12	f) We need to offer our bodies to God as living sacrifices.
13	e) We must obey the governmental authorities that exist.
14	b) We are to avoid doing things that cause others to stumble.

9 Your chart should look like this:

EVENTS IN PAUL'S MINISTRY	
<i>Second Missionary Journey</i>	<i>Third Missionary Journey</i>
<p>a) Paul founded the church in Thessalonica.</p> <p>b) Paul founded the church in Corinth.</p> <p>c) Paul received news from Timothy about the Thessalonians.</p> <p>d) Paul received news about the Corinthians.</p> <p>e) Paul wrote to the Thessalonians.</p>	<p>f) Paul wrote to the Corinthians.</p> <p>g) Paul wrote to the Romans.</p>