

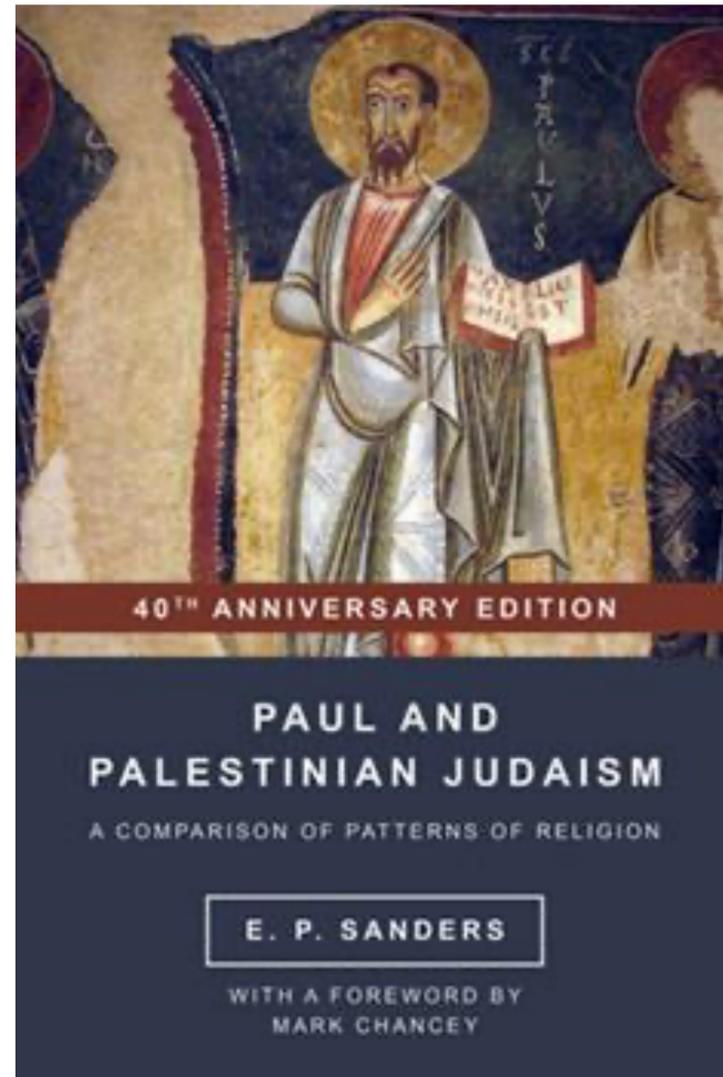
# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Issue: Significance of Ephesians

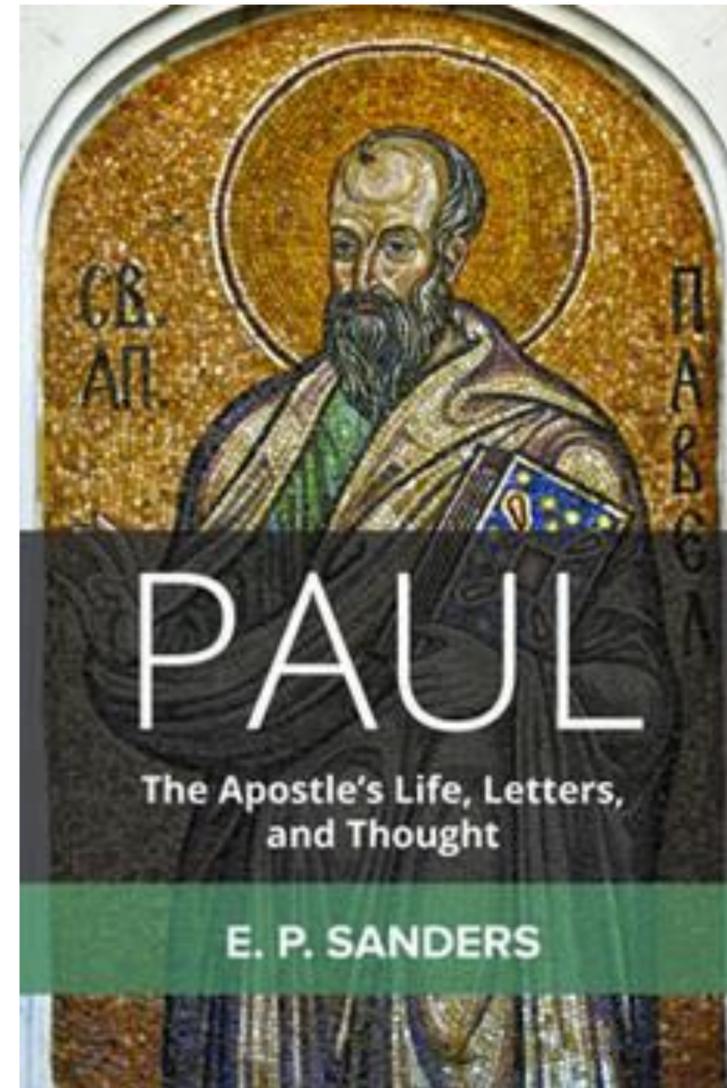
Questions:

1. In what sense is Ephesians more of a manifesto than Paul's other letters?
2. What new revelation is contained in Ephesians? How significant is that new revelation?
3. What is the purpose of the church? What is the "work of the ministry" that the church is to do?
4. When churches mature, what do they look like?

# New Perspective on Paul—Liberal

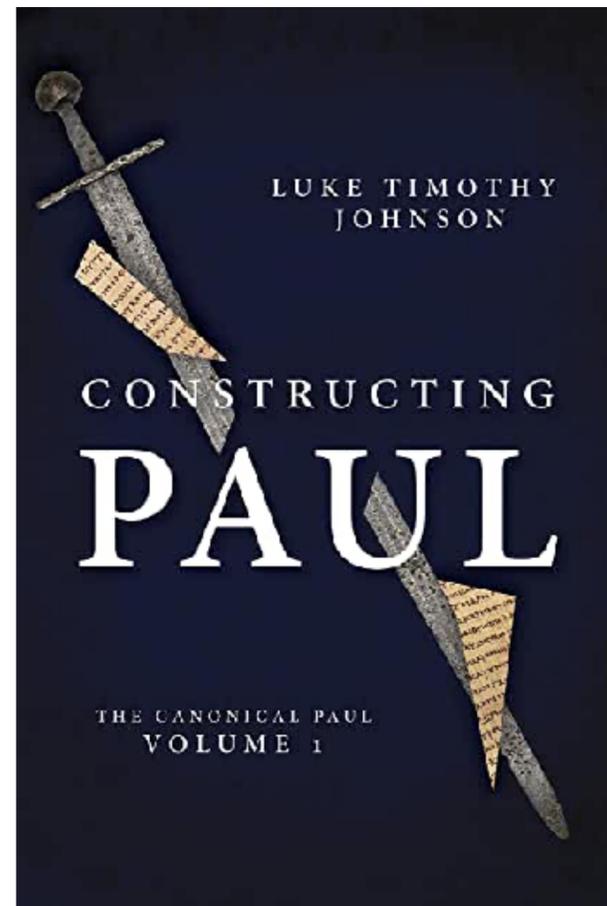


1977

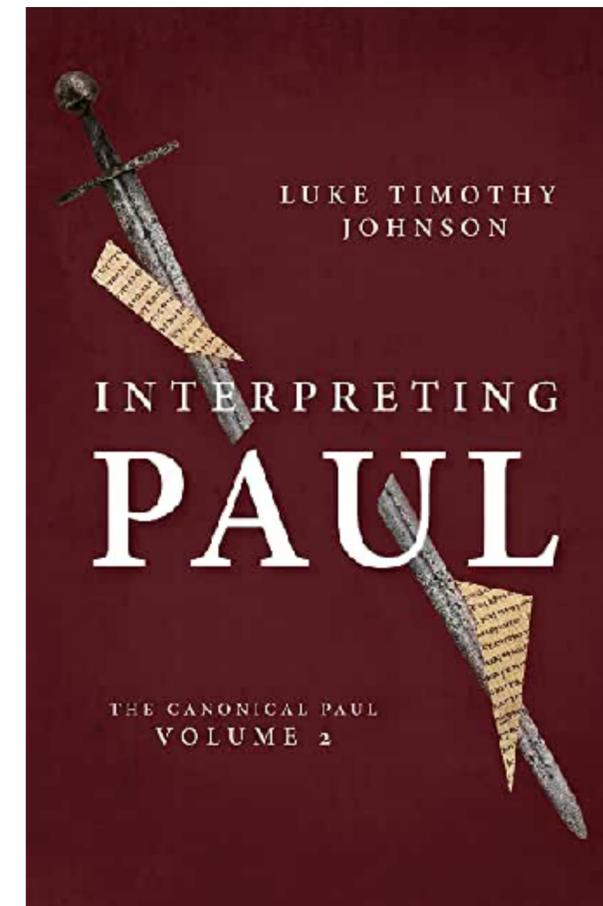


2015

# New Perspective on Paul—Catholic

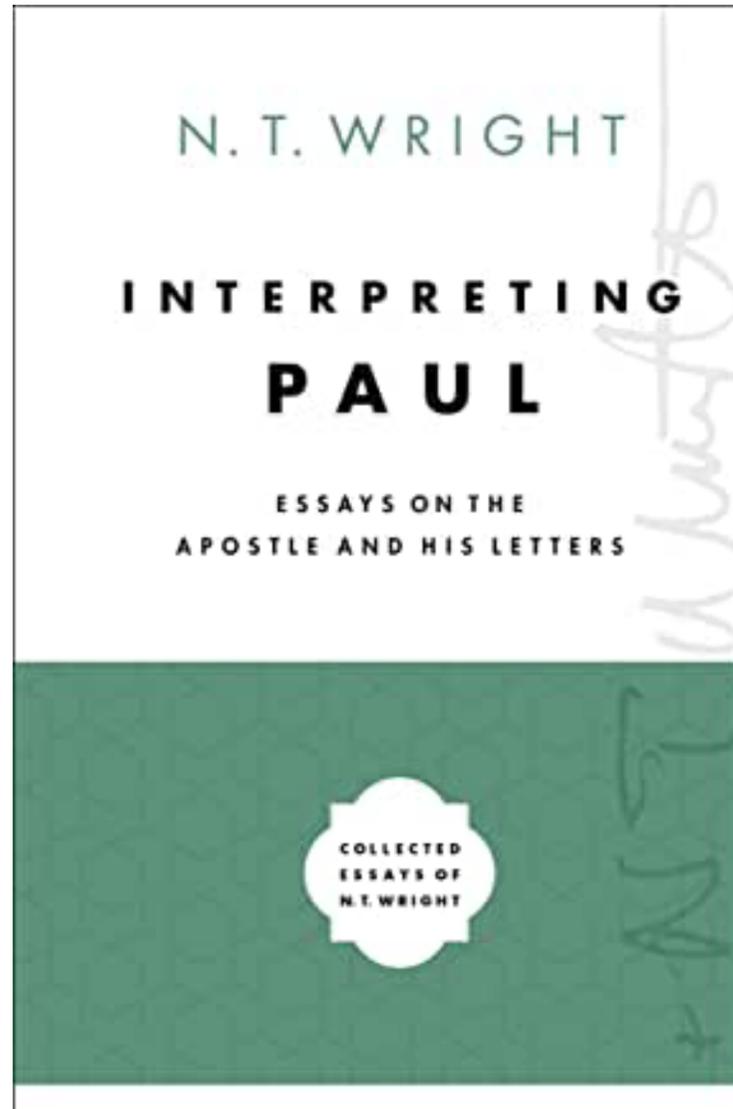


**2020**

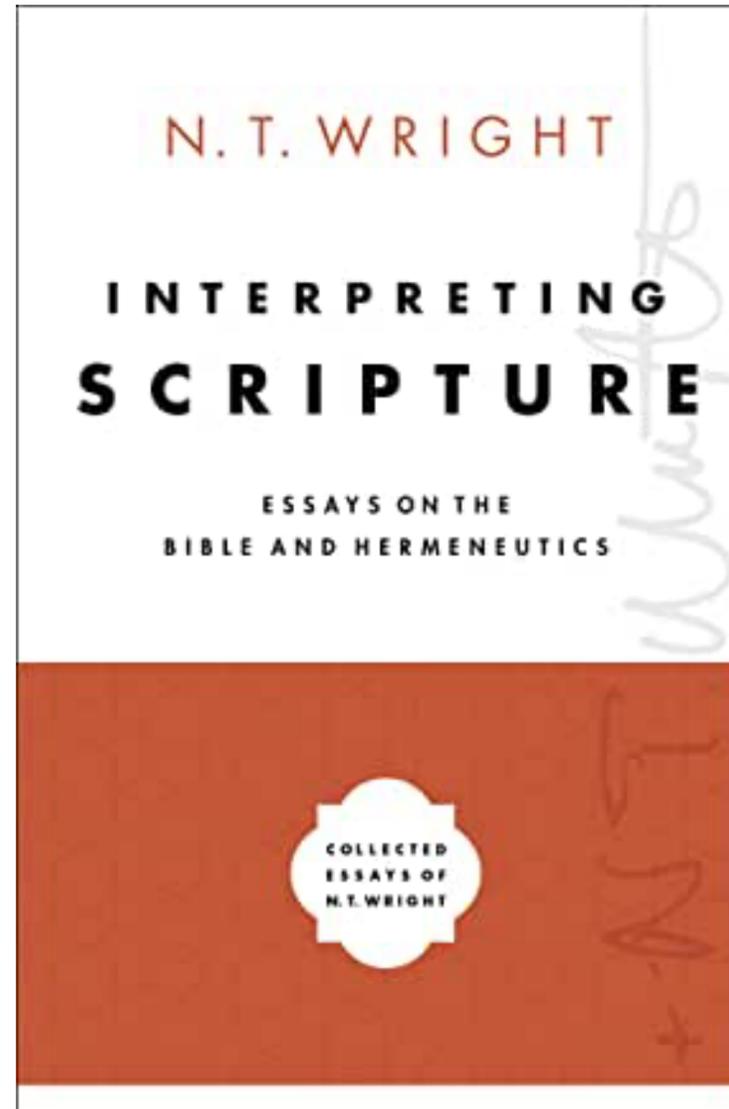


**2021**

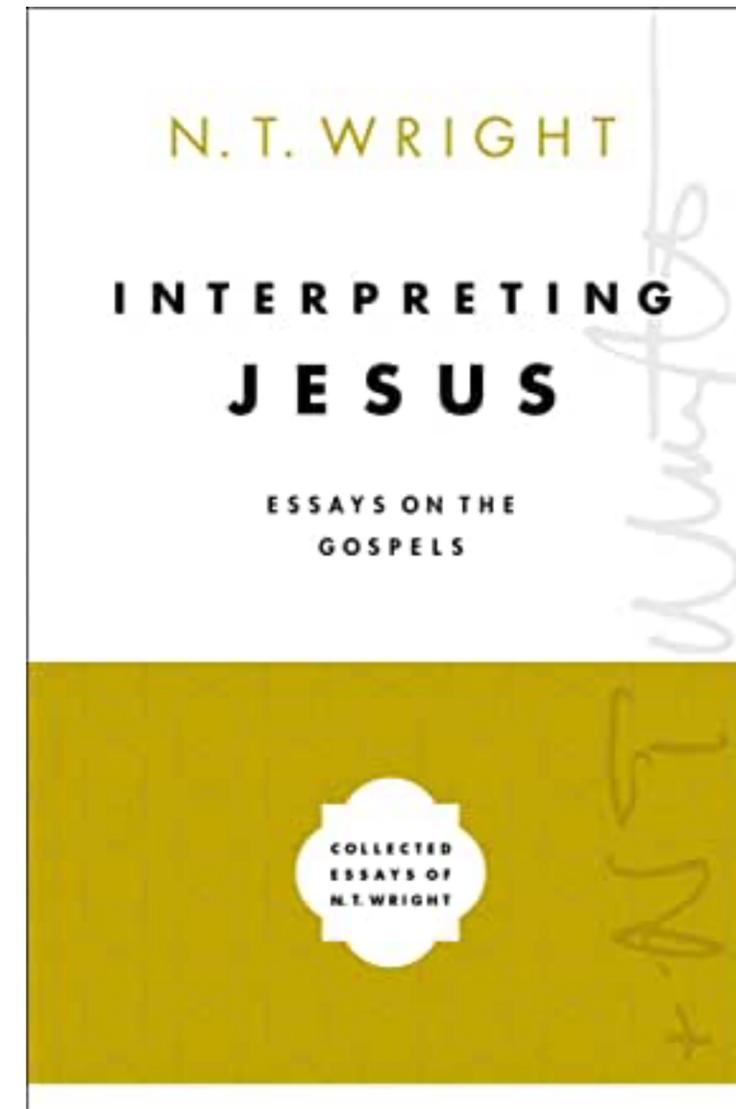
# New Perspective on Paul—Evangelical



2020



2020



2020

# New Perspective on Paul

Interpreting III: New Perspective on Paul, A Radical Hermeneutical Turn

Units:

Unit 1: A New Perspective in Hermeneutics

Unit 2: Interpreting Paul

Unit 3: Paul and Greco-Roman Research

Unit 4: Practicing Pauline Theology in Culture

Unit 5: Toward a Post-Perspective Old and New Testament Theology

# New Perspective on Paul

## Old Perspective on Paul

Sanders: “Paul was a coherent, but not systematic, thinker” (like systematic theologians since the Reformation)

Johnson: (What) “they have been taught has been abstracted from certain dialogues and arranged into a logical system that is nowhere to be found as such in the dialogues themselves.” (Plato)

Wright: “not just bits and pieces, miscellaneous topoi which just happen to turn up in these irrelevant ‘contingent’ contexts like oddly shaped pearls on an irrelevant string.”

## New Perspective on Paul

Sanders: “Paul as a theological thinker with a coherent viewpoint”

Johnson: “When they actually begin to read the dialogues in all their particularity and complexity, they begin to discover how much exciting and challenging thought has escaped the usual categories.” (Plato)

Wright: “The more time we spend in the careful reading of Paul, and in the study of his worldview, his theology and his aims and intentions, the more he emerges as a deeply coherent thinker. His main themes may well not fit the boxes constructed by later Christian dogmatics of whatever type. They generate their own categories....”

# New Perspective on Paul

## Old Perspective on Paul

Paul was a systematic theologian like Calvin, but contained unsystematized doctrine that could be systemized by future theologians. But his thought was not organized and fully developed nor fully logical; therefore, it must be made clearer and clearer by highly skilled (Western) systematic theologians.

## New Perspective on Paul

Paul was a coherent thinker who did theology in culture amongst his churches, from a framework of fully integrated historical narrative and dense cyclic organizing centers (theological core/topoi). It enables us to do similar theology in culture amongst our churches today, together they make up the essence of Christ's grand strategy.

# New Perspective on Paul

## Old Perspective on Paul

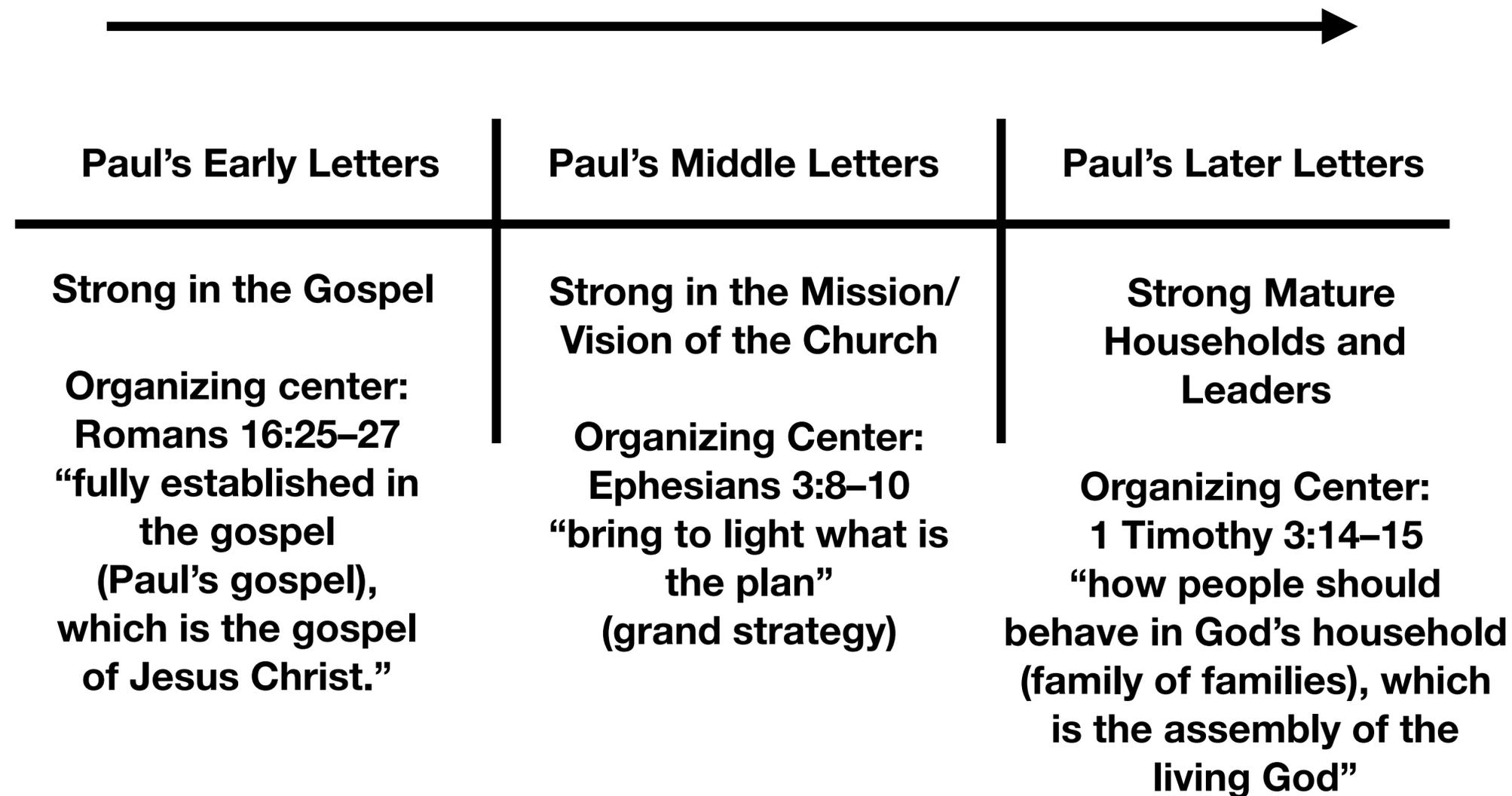
Paul's letters contain miscellaneous, often unrelated topics, that would be useful for future believers, especially in dealing with sin, salvation, and living the Christian life. These topics are a significant part of today's ever growing systematic theologies.

## New Perspective on Paul

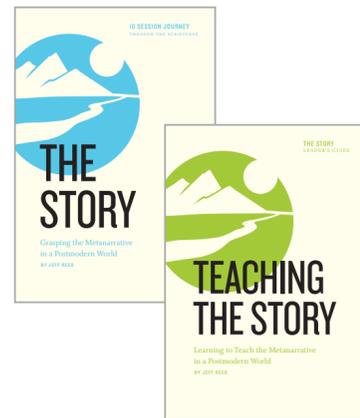
Paul's letters form a coherent, interlocking shape, foundational for churches in any generation to fully understand Christ's grand strategy of the Church being central to His unfolding kingdom and to live in full alignment of that grand strategy.

# Paul's Early, Middle, and Later Letters

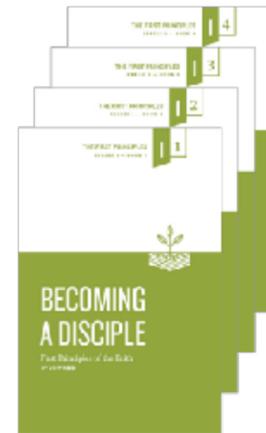
## The Process of Building Strong Churches



# New Perspective on Paul



**Kerygma**  
**Early Acts**  
**Apostles' Teaching**  
**6 months**  
**Paul: 3 years "night and day"**



**Didache**  
**Body of Acts**  
**Theology of Paul**  
**1½ years**



**Full Kerygma**  
**After Acts**  
**Apostles' Gospels**  
**1 year**





# Paul's Middle Letters

Fully Revealing Christ's Grand Strategy

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In the middle letters, we get a full revelation of Christ's grand strategy after He inaugurated the Kingdom—that is the Church.

We will also look at the letters from the viewpoint of Paul building his global apostolic network, as we began to do in his early letters.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

These middle letters were all written close together (at the end of Acts—20:30), during the 2 years Paul was under house arrest—from February, 60, to March, 62. Most likely...

Ephesians was written Autumn 60

Colossians and Philemon—Autumn 61

Philippians—early Spring 62

These letters give us the full revelation of the Church. But think of the battles that were fought before this.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

The battle for the gospel went from Autumn A.D. 47, until the writing of Romans in the middle of November 56—10 years

Paul's first confrontation with Peter—Autumn 47 (Gal. 2:1–10)

Peter in Antioch—Autumn 49 (Gal. 2:11–16)

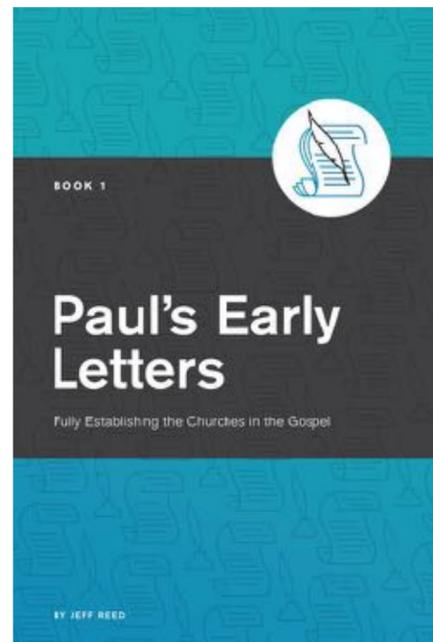
Jerusalem Council—Autumn 49

Then the early letters of Paul—Autumn 49 to Romans in 56

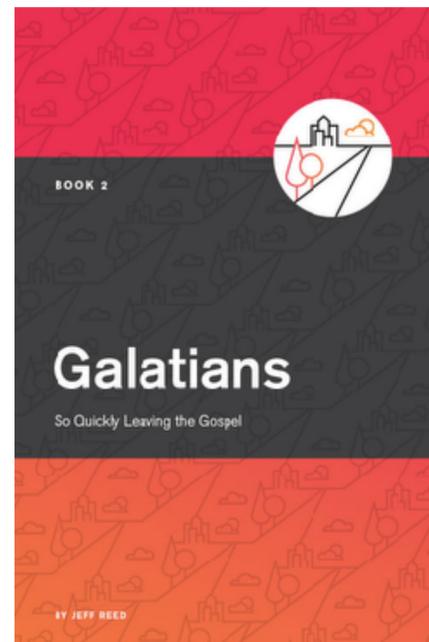
It took Paul a decade to win that argument, which he completed with his Romans manifesto on the gospel.

Now on to his rather compact, full unveiling of the Church.

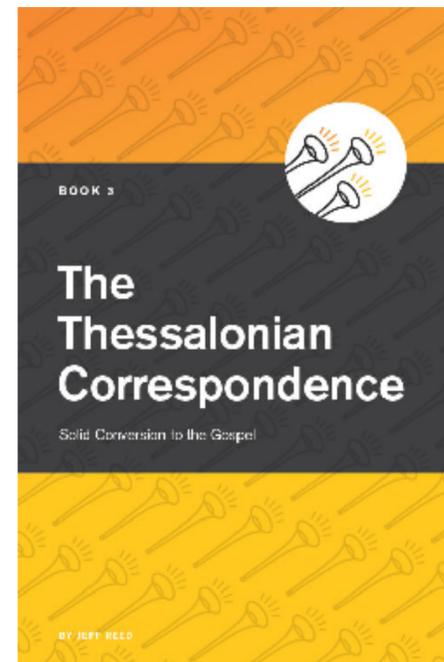
# Paul's Early Letters



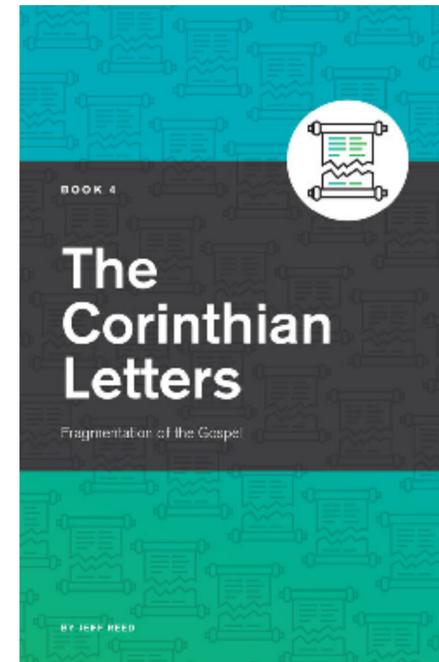
A.D. 49–56



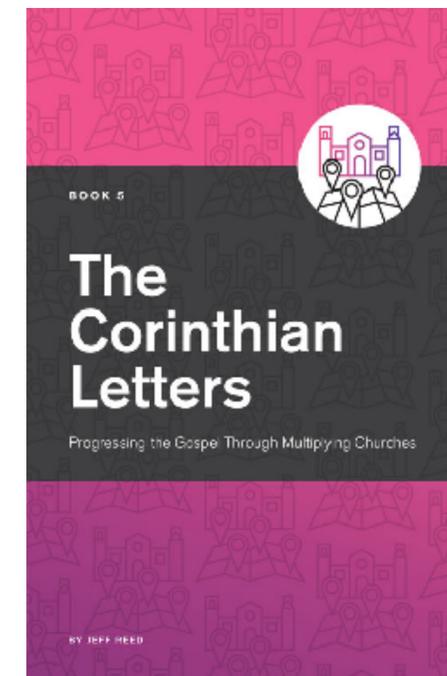
Autumn 49



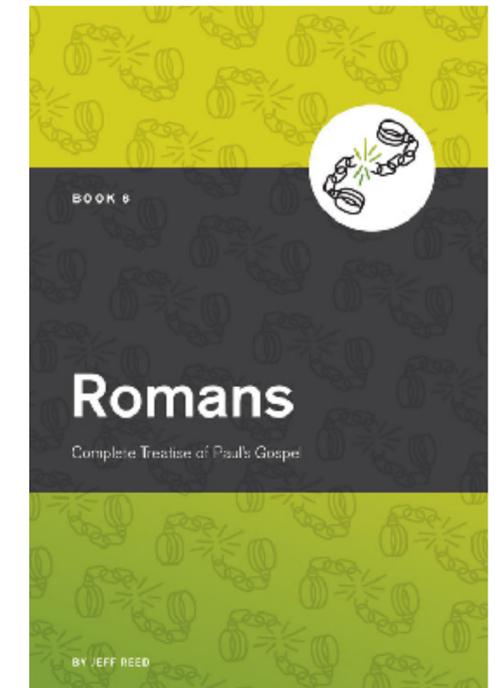
Winter/Summer 51



Sept. 53

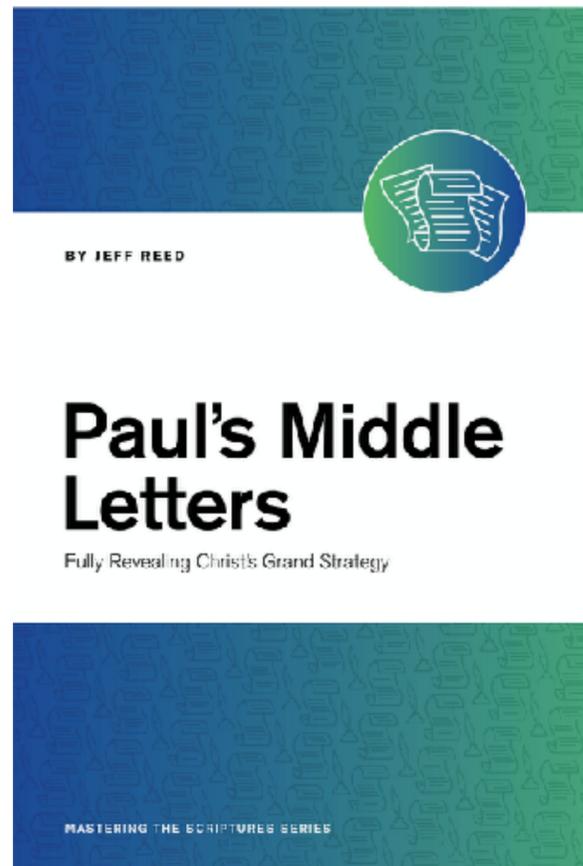


June 56

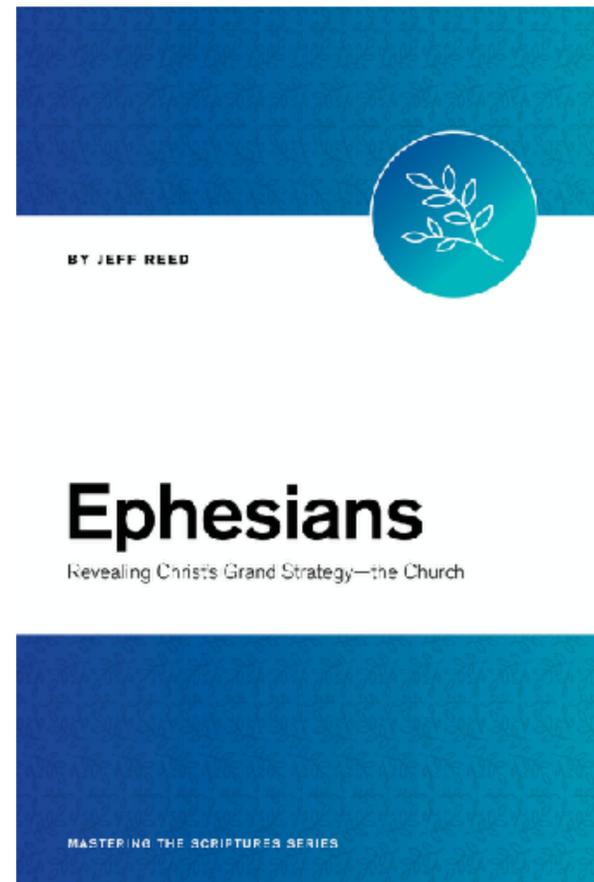


Nov. 56

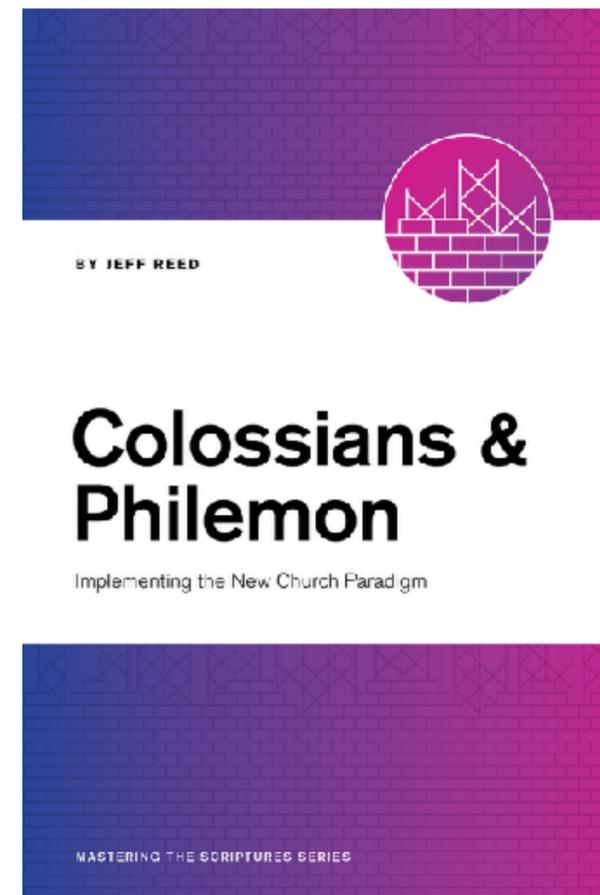
# Paul's Middle Letters



Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



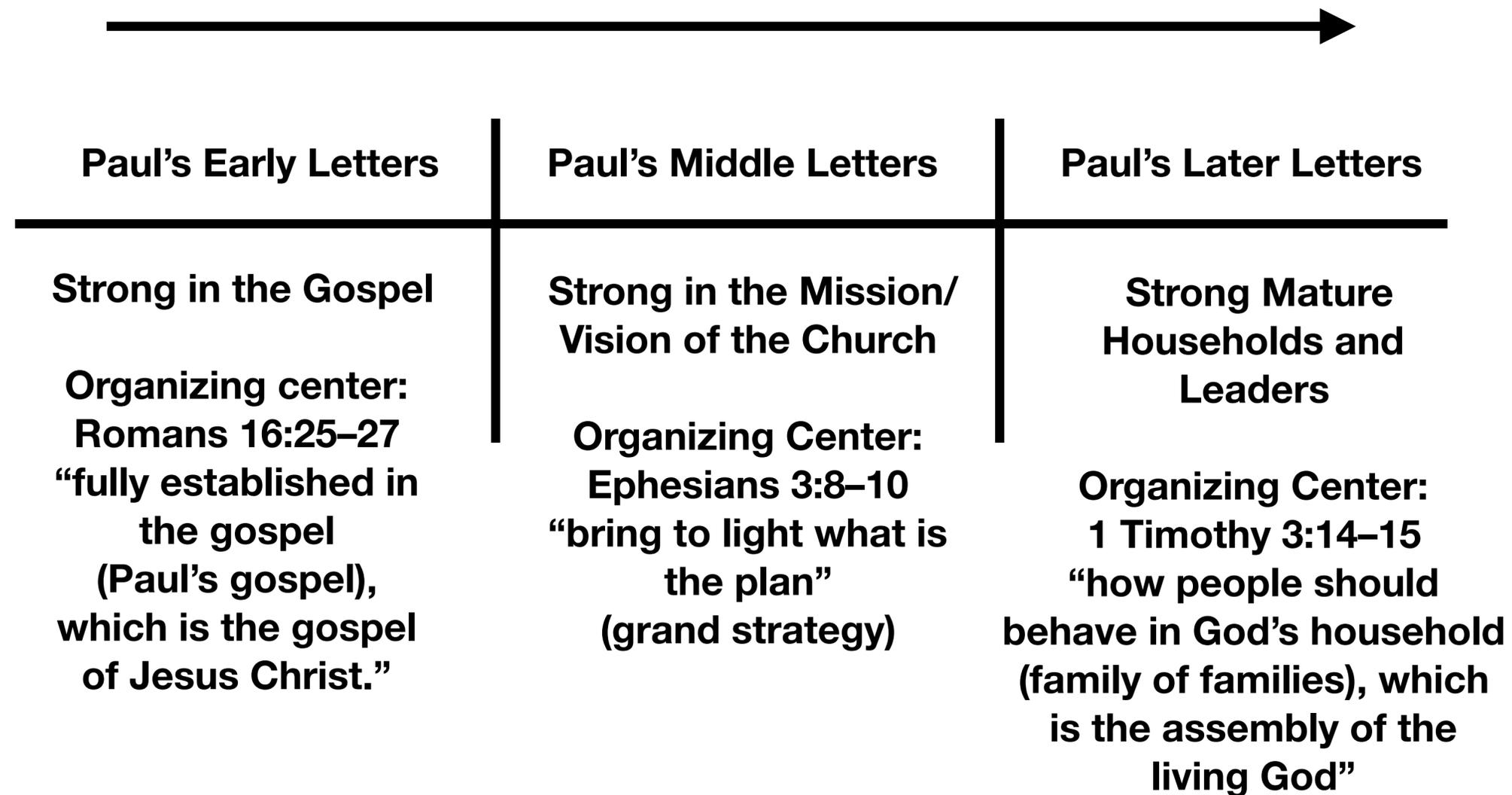
Autumn 61



Spring 62

# Paul's Early, Middle, and Later Letters

## The Process of Building Strong Churches



Paul's Early Letters	Paul's Middle Letters	Paul's Later Letters
<b>Strong in the Gospel</b>  Organizing center: Romans 16:25–27 “fully established in the gospel (Paul's gospel), which is the gospel of Jesus Christ.”	<b>Strong in the Mission/ Vision of the Church</b>  Organizing Center: Ephesians 3:8–10 “bring to light what is the plan” (grand strategy)	<b>Strong Mature Households and Leaders</b>  Organizing Center: 1 Timothy 3:14–15 “how people should behave in God's household (family of families), which is the assembly of the living God”

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

These letters were all written close together (at the end of Acts—20:30), during the 2 years Paul was under house arrest—from February 60, to March 62. Most likely...

Ephesians was written Autumn A.D. 60

Colossians and Philemon—Autumn 61

Philippians—early Spring 62

In these letters, we are looking into the heart of Paul's network:

Ephesians—hub churches

Colossians and Philemon—cluster churches

Philippians—node churches

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In these 2 compact years and 4 small letters we get a full revelation of Christ's Church, which had never before been fully revealed.

The organizing center of these letters:

<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:7–10

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Paul lays out his job description very clearly.

Paul's 2-fold job description:

1. Preach the gospel to the Gentiles (a 10-year battle for the gospel)
2. Fully reveal the heart of Christ's grand strategy—the Church

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## **Ephesians – Hub Churches**

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" — the Church — to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with special attention to training the elders of this strategic city in the whole plan of Christ, for an entire 3-year period.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Ephesus

<sup>20</sup> I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house.... <sup>31</sup> Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears.

Acts 20:20, 31

<sup>8</sup> He entered the synagogue and for three months spoke out boldly, and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. <sup>9</sup> When some stubbornly refused to believe and spoke evil of the Way before the congregation, he left them, taking the disciples with him, and argued daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup> This continued for two years, so that all the residents of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, heard the word of the Lord.

Acts 19:8–10

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## Complex Apostolic Networking Insights from Ephesus

We know that Ephesus was strategic for many reasons. The biggest reason was Paul's own investment of time.

1. He taught out of the hall of Tyrannus for 2 years and established many churches in the surrounding area: 11 churches were started to the east, north, and west of Ephesus.
2. He spent night and day for a period of 3 years teaching the elders "the whole plan of God."

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## Ephesians – Hub Churches

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" – the Church – to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with special attention to training the elders of this strategic city in the whole plan of Christ, for an entire 3-year period.

We will look briefly at 4 key passages in Ephesians this morning:

2:19–21; 3:7–10; 4:1–6; 4:11–16

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup> In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; <sup>22</sup> in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Ephesians 2:19–21

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this passage, we begin to build the picture of the Church.

- It is a large household—one big global family.
- It has one foundation—the Apostles and prophets—with Christ as the cornerstone.
- The whole structure is built by Christ—His tools are the Apostles and prophets, an idea we will expand on in a moment.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this passage, we see that the Church is the center of Christ's plan—His grand strategy after inaugurating the kingdom.

The organizing center of these letters:

<sup>7</sup> Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of his power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make everyone see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things; <sup>10</sup> so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 3:7–10

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Paul lays out his job description very clearly.

Paul's 2-fold job description:

1. Preach the gospel to the Gentiles (a 10-year battle for the gospel).
2. Fully reveal the heart of Christ's grand strategy—the Church.

It is Christ's strategy for progressing the gospel. It will be the heart of his unfolding kingdom, and it will stun the rulers and authorities even in the heavenly places. It was a mystery (hidden) until this time.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup> with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup> making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup> one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1–6

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this passage we see more about that foundation

- There is just one foundation being laid—one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God—weaving it all together in His great plan for fully realizing His kingdom with Christ on the throne.
- The one hope and one faith are essentially overlapping concepts referring to *the kerygma*—the gospel story, the core of our hope; and the faith is the didache, the teaching, the deposit, the sound doctrine.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

<sup>11</sup> The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, <sup>13</sup> until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. <sup>14</sup> We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Ephesians 4:11–16

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

In this final passage, we see how the Church is built and what it does.

- It is built by those gifted leaders—apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastors and teachers. They equip the saints in the churches to do the work of the ministry—service.
- The saints do the work of the ministry (not hired ministers); and when they are equipped and doing the ministry, the church will mature; and when the church matures fully in Christ, the watching world will see Christ, and it will stun rulers in the heavenly places.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

This is worked out in networks of churches—remember Paul is writing these letters to churches in the extended network he was building around Ephesus—11 churches.

Remember what he said later in his letter to Titus:

- He left him in Crete to set in order the churches on the island of Crete.
- And when they are set in order—built correctly—he finishes with “let our people engage in good occupations and meet pressing needs.”

# Significance of Ephesians

Issue: Significance of Ephesians for us today

Questions:

1. Why is Paul's letter to Ephesus so significant for our churches today?
2. In what way does it establish the centrality of the church in Christ's grand strategy?
3. What is entailed in "the work of the ministry"? Who is to be doing the work of the ministry?
4. How do we know if we are becoming mature churches? What is the criteria?

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

Issue: Significance of Ephesians

Questions:

1. In what sense is Ephesians more of a manifesto than Paul's other letters?
2. What new revelation is contained in Ephesians? How significant is that new revelation?
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4. When churches mature, what do they look like?