

THE WHOLE BIBLE: John – 2 Corinthians

GOSPEL OF JOHN

- heavy on discourse | feeding of 5000 – only John gives us long discourse
- many unique stories: Nicodemus, women at well, raising of Lazarus
- whereas Synoptics show us divinity of Jesus largely in what he did
- Gospel of John has these high, elevated self-attesting statements

John 14

¹“Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.

²In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to where I am going.”

⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

- volume II of Gospel of Luke (Luke and Acts is a single work)
- story of Christianity’s origins, includes Jesus and church (linked)
- distinctive of Gospel of Luke is emphasis on gospel for outsiders and in Acts, this is fulfilled in gospel going out to Gentiles
- issue of precedence | how much of Acts is a model for us today?

Acts 1:8 | thesis statement

⁸But 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.

Acts 10:9-16, 34-35 | Gospel for Gentiles

⁹The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth.

¹²In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.

¹³And there came a voice to him: “Rise, Peter; kill and eat.” ¹⁴But Peter said, “By no means, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.” ¹⁵And the voice came to him again a second time, “What God has

made clean, do not call common.” ¹⁶This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

³⁴So Peter opened his mouth and said: “Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.”

INTRODUCTION TO EPISTLES

- 22 of 27 books of New Testament are epistles
- church was widespread geographically | communicate over distance
- all letters written to address specific issues in churches

The epistles were written and received as the Word of God

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

2 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, ¹⁶as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures (graph).

SAUL OF TARSUS

- straddled two worlds: Jewish Palestine and Greco-Roman world
- Paul was uniquely situated to become an apostle to the Gentiles

Acts 22:3

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.”

Galatians 1:13-16

¹³For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. ¹⁴And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers. ¹⁵But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, ¹⁶was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,

INTRODUCTION TO ROMANS

- longest of Paul's letters and most theologically dense
- spells out the gospel in fullest form

Main theme: the righteousness of God received by faith

Romans 3:20-26

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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.

Impotence of the moral law

- obedience to Ten Commandments and moral law
- the law doesn't "justify" | instead, teaches us that we are sinners

The "righteousness of God"

- Martin Luther called this an "alien righteousness"
- received through faith – empty hand that receives the gift

INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS

- unlike Romans, very situational and addresses practical problems
 - divisions and factions; sexual immorality; social snobbery
 - questions about marriage, divorce, pagan rituals, resurrection

1 Corinthians 5:1-13

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. ² And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

³ For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. ⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – ¹⁰ not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler – not even to eat with such a one. ¹² For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? ¹³ God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

Principle of church discipline

- loving to sinner – accountability, not enabling
- loving to community – holiness is corporate, not just individual

"Let him be removed from among you"

- not about shunning, but about "the name of Christ"

INTRODUCTION TO 2 CORINTHIANS

- many questioned if Paul could be an apostle if suffers so much
- most personal of Paul's letters – full of anguish and sorrow
- central theme: suffering and weakness in the Christian life

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Paradox of the cross

- Jesus is exalted through his suffering and death
- same pattern is true for us – cross-shaped life
 - called to a life of self-giving, suffering love

Notes

Gospel of John

- written by John, youngest disciple | “beloved disciple”
- heavy on discourse | feeding of 5000 – only John gives us long discourse
- many unique stories focusing on Jesus’ identity
 - Nicodemus, women at well, raising of Lazarus
- whereas Synoptics show us divinity of Jesus largely in what he did
 - forgives sins, walks on water, calms sea
- Gospel of John has these high, elevated self-attesting statements
 - “I and the Father are one”
 - “if seen me, seen Father”
 - “before Abraham was, I am”
- upper-room discourse: extensive teaching on Spirit

John 14

¹ “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me.
² In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. ⁴ And you know the way to where I am going.”

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Very strong statement

- not, there is a way; I am showing you the way
- not just telling truth | not just telling how to have life

Acts of the Apostles

- volume 2 of Luke’s Gospel – telling us origins of Christianity
 - not just life, death and resurrection of Jesus
 - but also the beginnings of church
- distinctive of Gospel of Luke is emphasis on gospel for outsiders
- in Acts, this is fulfilled in gospel going out to Gentiles

Acts 1:8 | thesis statement

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Acts 10:9-16, 34-35 | Gospel for Gentiles

⁹ The next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. ¹⁰ And he became hungry and wanted something to eat, but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance ¹¹ and saw the heavens opened and something like a great sheet descending, being let down by its four corners upon the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.

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Gospel breaks down racial and cultural barriers

- Gentile believers do not have to adopt Jewish religious practices
 - huge controversy over circumcision
- central importance of Paul’s conversion (3x)
 - Paul is called as an Apostle to Gentiles

Issue of precedence

- how much of Acts is a model for us today?
- debate whether Acts is blueprint for all churches or redemptive history
 - gifts of Holy Spirit: tongues, miraculous healings

Acts is “redemptive history”

- unique, unrepeatable events in salvation history
- apostolic age was foundation to church
 - Eph. 2:20 – church is built on foundation of apostles and prophets
 - age of “signs and wonders” | prophesy, healings, miracles

The Epistles

- Greek *epistole* – “letter” (fancier word)
- 22 of 27 bks of NT are epistles | except Gospels + Acts
- church was widespread geographically
- letters were effective way to communicate over long distances
- worth pausing to reflect – how adaptable the Bible is
 - written in 3 languages, in multiple genres, different cultures
 - means Christianity is eternal, but form is variable
 - no “Christian culture” | Christianity can go out into world
- all letters written to address specific issues in churches
- some more than others | Romans vs. Corinthians

Epistles written after the ministry of Jesus

- whereas Gospels are narratives | gospel is veiled
 - story unfolds organically, with disciples ignorant
- only after Resurrection, apostles understood gospel
 - Gal. 1:18 – Paul retreats to Arabia for 3 years to think
 - repeatedly, in Gospels – “disciples didn’t understand until after”
- Epistles are discourse and arguments, explicit theology

The epistles were written and received as the Word of God

- self-conscious understanding that epistles are very Word of God

1 Thessalonians 2:13

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

2 Peter 3:15-16

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Not all letters were preserved

- probably 4 Corinthians letters | only have 2
- 1 Cor 5:9 – “I wrote to you in my letter...”

Biography of Saul of Tarsus

- wrote 13 of 22 letters | 25% of NT (2nd to Luke)
- straddled two worlds: Jewish Palestine and Greco-Roman world

Paul the Jew

- trained by Gamaliel (member of Sanhedrin), leading rabbi
- Paul was a Pharisee, rigorous and devout

Acts 22:3

“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day.”

Paul the Roman citizen

- grew up among the Jewish diaspora in city of Tarsus
 - Tarsus was an important commercial center in Asia Minor
- Acts 22:28, “I am a citizen by birth”
- Roman citizenship tiny minority of elite
- “citizen by birth”: Paul’s family well-established in Roman world

Therefore, Paul uniquely situated to become “apostle to the Gentiles”

- Acts 9:15, Romans 1:5, 11:13, 1 Timothy 2:7

Galatians 1:13-16

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God intended gospel to go out to whole world

- “for earth will be filled with knowledge of the glory of Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Hab. 2:14)
- Israel – light to nations | Temple – house of prayer for all nations
- Great Commission – “go therefore and make disciples of all nations”

But remember, Jesus remained within borders of Israel entire life

- all 12 disciples were Jewish men | from provincial Galilee
- so how did Christianity make leap from Jewish world to wider world?
- story of Acts – church in Antioch and missionary journeys of Paul

Introduction to Romans

- addressed to church in Rome
- for most part, not addressing any specific problems – generalized
- longest of Paul’s letters and most theologically dense
- spells out the gospel in fullest form

Main theme: the righteousness of God received by faith

Romans 3:20-26

²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. ²¹ But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – ²² the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ 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. ²⁶ 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.

Impotence of the moral law

- what are the “works of the law”?
 - obedience to Ten Commandments and moral law

The law doesn’t “justify”

- justification is a verdict – righteous standing before God
- instead, counterintuitively, the law teaches us that we are sinners
 - law says, “this is how you can be good”
 - but in end, law makes us sinners (consciousness of sin)

v. 21 – “but now, the righteousness of God manifest apart from law”

- crucial turning point | key to gospel
- what is “righteousness of God”?
 - not ours, because no one is righteous
 - but God’s righteousness – perfect moral record of Christ
- Martin Luther called this an “alien righteousness”
- imputed to us – credited to our account

This main dispute with Roman Catholicism

- justification comes at end of a moral life
 - starts with faith, grace infused/enabled, but moral record
 - necessity of purgatory

Protestant Reformation

- justification comes at beginning of Christian life
- but what about good works then?
 - good works are fruit of justification, not grounds
 - we are good because we are justified, not in order to be justified

Received through faith

- faith is fitting instrument of our justification
 - act of humility and repentance | glorifies the giver
- faith is the empty hand that receives the gift

v. 26 – “so that he might be just and the justifier of the believer”

- cross satisfies demands of law (just) and gives grace (justifier)
-

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

- unlike Romans, very situational and addresses practical problems
 - divisions and factions; sexual immorality; social snobbery
 - questions about marriage, divorce, pagan rituals, resurrection

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⁴ When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, ⁵ you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? ⁷ Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

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Principle of church discipline

- feels very threatening | many people have been abused by church
- American individualism – don’t want bonds of community
 - like in abstract, a sense of belonging and connectedness
 - but don’t like obligation and responsibility to others

Church is a community of love

- love does the hard but necessary thing
- loving to sinner – accountability, not enabling
 - easiest thing is to ignore and enable
 - but to intervene, to speak truth in love is suffering
- loving to community – holiness is corporate, not just individual
 - not private morality, but communal life of holiness
 - v. 6, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump”
 - living in community, we influence one another

“Let him be removed from among you”

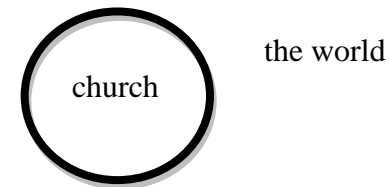
- this is widely misunderstood and poorly practiced in churches
 - either neglected entirely or practiced heavy-handedly

The “removal” is not about shunning

- not exclusionary and discarding friendships and relationships

But about taking away the “name of Christ” from someone living in contradiction to the gospel

- telling someone, “you’re not living like a follower of Christ”
- formal process – excommunication
 - remove from church membership (must be explicit, not implicit)
 - v. 11, “who bears the name of brother”



This is what is means “not to associate” (v. 9)

- doesn’t mean no friendships or attendance in church
 - Jesus eat with tax collectors and prostitutes
- v. 10, “not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world”
 - church discipline is for those *inside* the church, not outside

Inside the church, practice fellowship meal – Communion

- v. 11, “not even to eat with such a one”

Outside the church is the realm of Satan

- v 5, “deliver this man to Satan” ... so that he may be saved
- purpose of excommunication is to wake up a brother in Christ

Introduction to 2 Corinthians

- many questioned if Paul could be an apostle if suffers so much
- most personal of Paul's letters – full of anguish and sorrow
- what is at stake is nothing less than the gospel
 - worldly values of power and success vs. gospel values of weakness and suffering

Timeline of Corinthian church (5 year period)

- Paul plants church (Acts 18) – 1.5 years
- receives report of problems (1 Cor. 1:11)
 - divisions, immorality, false teachers who reject Paul
- writes 1 Corinthians | but mixed reception
- personal painful visit (2 Cor. 2:1)
- followed up with a “tearful letter”
- finally, 2 Corinthians

Central theme – suffering and weakness in the Christian life

- questioning: how Paul be apostle if his life is full of troubles?
- Paul's response: cross is not just how we are saved
 - but a pattern of life we live as followers of Jesus

2 Corinthians 4:7-12

⁷ But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. ⁸ We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; ⁹ persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; ¹⁰ always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. ¹¹ For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. ¹² So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Paradox of the cross

- Jesus is exalted through his suffering and death
- and same pattern is true for us: cruciform-life
 - way up is the way down
 - “whoever wants greatest must be servant of all”
 - “first will be last, last will be first”

v. 10 – “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus”

- in our own bodies and lives, we testify to the suffering love of Jesus
- we are walking examples of self-giving love, suffering love
- Jesus displays his glory through his followers, in their suffering

This is a challenging teaching

- we don't want to suffer | we want a safe, comfortable life
- 1 Peter 4:12 – “do not be surprised at the fiery trial, as though something strange were happening to you”
- 2 Tim. 3:12 – “all desire a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”

Christian life is joyful suffering for sake of Christ