

Week 6 Introduction to the Pauline Epistles

1. The Importance of the Pauline Epistles

- 1) They make up the largest portion of the New Testament(13or14 letters).
- 2) They serve as foundational documents for the theology, ethics, and structure of the early church.
- 3) They deliver core doctrines such as the gospel(cross and resurrection), ecclesiology, soteriology, and eschatology.

2. Classification of the Pauline Epistles

1) Personal Letters

- 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
(Written for individuals, especially church leaders)

2) Church Letters

- 1) Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians,
 - 2) Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians
- (Addressed to churches to teach doctrine and resolve issues)

3) Prison Epistles

- Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
(Written while Paul was imprisoned)

4) Pastoral Epistles

- 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus
(Guidance for developing church leadership)

3. Major Themes in Paul's Letters

Theme	Description
Gospel	Salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ
Justification by Faith	Declared righteous through faith (focused in Romans)
Church	The Church as the body of Christ, united by the Spirit
Sanctification	Holy living and growth of believers (Romans, Galatians)
Eschatology	Christ's second coming and the final resurrection (Thessalonians)

4. Theological Characteristics of Paul's Letters

- 1) Grace-centered: Salvation by grace, not by works
- 2) Christ-centered: All doctrines revolve around Jesus Christ
- 3) Emphasis on the Holy Spirit: New life and church existence through

the Spirit

- 4) Community-focused: Emphasizes communal life, not just individual salvation
-

5. Brief Overview of Each Epistle

Epistle	Key Theme
Romans	God's plan of salvation and righteousness
1 & 2 Corinthians	Church issues and the theology of the cross
Galatians	Freedom through faith vs. legalism
Ephesians	The mystery of the church and the believer's life
Philippians	Joy and the advancement of the gospel
Colossians	The supremacy of Christ
1 & 2 Thessalonians	Proper understanding of the Second Coming
1 & 2 Timothy, Titus	Guidelines for church leadership
Philemon	Social change through the gospel (freedom of a slave)

6. Principles for Interpreting the Pauline Epistles

- 1) Contextual Interpretation: Understanding the historical and situational background
 - 2) Gospel-centered Interpretation: Focusing on Christ and the gospel
 - 3) Harmony with the Whole Bible: Interpreting in line with the flow of both the Old and New Testaments
-

Summary

The Pauline Epistles reveal the core of the gospel and the essence of the church.

They are living documents that built the early church and continue to serve as the foundation of our faith and church life today.