



Intro to the New Testament:

Early Letters of Paul

Session Three

Paul's Letters and Letter Writing in the Greco-Roman World

- Literary letters averaged about 200 words
- Usual papyrus sheets were about 9 1/2 x 11 1/2 and could accommodate around 150 to 250 words depending on size of writing—most ancient letters used only one papyrus page
- Paul's average length for his letters runs to about 1,300 words
- For long documents like Paul's letters, single papyrus sheets were joined edge to edge and rolled to form a scroll
- We know that Paul used scribes as one identifies himself in the letter to the Romans

Paul's Letters and Letter Writing in the Greco-Roman World Format:

- Ancient letters opened with a greeting which included the sender's name, usually the name of the recipient, wishes for good health and success, and assurance of sender's prayers
- The main body followed
- Finally a farewell with sometimes a signature; sometimes the farewell included greetings from others besides the author along with more good wishes



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Galatians

Authorship

- The author begins the letter identifying himself as Paul an apostle and emphasizes his authority by saying in 5:2 “I Paul say to you...”
- Most scholars view Galatians as the standard example of Paul’s style and theology

Addressees

- Scholars are divided regarding the geographical location of these churches some favouring North Galatia and some South Galatia
- **North Theory:** Paul visited on his second journey on the way from Pisidian Antioch to Toas
- **South Theory:** Paul addresses his first letter to the churches in South Galatia after the first missionary journey but before the Jerusalem council
- The evidence seems to favour a south Galatian location

Dating

- The date of the letter depends on who Paul was addressing so where it falls in his journeys
- As we have said the evidence seems to favour the south Galatian location therefore we accept an earlier date somewhere between A. D. 50 – 57
- However, this is widely debated and dating the letter has little effect on the interpretation of it's themes

Literary Form

- Paul deviates from his normal letter writing format in Galatians as he seems to be using a known Hellenistic form called the rebuke-request form
- This is why he leaves off things like a salutation with thanksgiving
- Instead, he expresses astonishment which was used as a standard to rebuke those for not meeting the expectations of the writer

Contents

- Salutation (1:1–5)
 - Rebuke (1:6–4:11)
 - Autobiography (1:13–2:21)
 - Argument from Scripture (3:6–29)
 - Request (4:12–6:10)
 - Autobiography (4:12–20)
 - Allegory from Scripture (4:21–31)
 - Ethical instruction (5:1–6:10)
- Subscription (6:11–18)



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1 & 2 Thessalonians

1 Thessalonians

- Throughout the *first section* Paul links the Thessalonians with the people of God, the OT prophets, and the missionaries themselves to give them a way to think about themselves that will help them to stand with certainty amidst adversity
- The *second section* exhorts them to holy living especially sexual morality
- Then Paul deals with Christ's return which is the basis for remaining alert and sober living, to faith, love and hope, and to mutual encouragement
- His *main concern* for this eschatological section seems to be concern that some Thessalonian Christians about the fate of some who have died before Christ's return

2 Thessalonians

- This letter reveals that central to Paul's concerns for the Thessalonian Christian community were questions regarding eschatology
- The problem Paul deals with seems to be that some believed the day of the Lord had already occurred
- He also addresses a problem of some in the community who refuse to work and he offers the examples of the apostolic missionaries' labour and economic self-sufficiency