

**Mid-Morning  
June 20, 2017  
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**Themes and Threads of the Holy Bible: Paul's Epistles – Romans, I Corinthians,  
Galatians, I & II Thessalonians**

**Themes and Threads of the Holy Bible: Paul's Epistles**

*Saul*, meaning “asked for” in Hebrew (see Acts 13:9) was born between 10 and 15 AD. A Jewish Pharisee, he was trained by Gamaliel, the grandson of Hillel who founded the school of interpretation bearing his name. Gamaliel was one of seven scholars in his nation's history to receive the title, *Rabban*, meaning “our master.” His teaching was less strict than the school of Shammai. Saul strictly adhered to Jewish customs (see Philippians 3:5) and persecuted Christians with fierce intensity (see Acts 9:1-2; Philippians 3:6). He did so with a pure conscience (see Acts 23:1; 2 Timothy 1:3) until his conversion on Damascus Road, between 33 and 35 AD (see Acts 9) when his name was changed to *Paul*, meaning “little” in Greek. The new apostle would later refer to his persecution of Christians as blaspheme (see 1 Timothy 1:13).

Paul was called by Jesus to evangelize the Gentiles when his position in Christ changed from out to in (see 2 Corinthians 5:17). Consequently, he transitioned from a persecutor of the church to a promoter of it (see Philippians 3:6). Paul's heart was transformed from hard to soft (see Ephesians 4:2, 18), and his clenched fists became open hands with palms facing upward, a symbol of his dependence on God and his desire to generously share the grace he had received. His theology changed from religion to relationship (see Ephesians 2:8) as his perspective of others was no longer judgmental, but merciful (see Romans 9:15-16). God had opened the eyes of his heart (see Acts 9; Ephesians 1:18). Paul had once thought righteousness could be earned through the pursuit of the law; however, after his Damascus Road experience and subsequent study, he realized it could only be received by grace through faith in Christ (see Ephesians 2:8-10). The result was a transition from death to life offered to anyone who would exercise that same faith (see Ephesians 2:5).

After arriving in a city as a missionary, Paul's business plan was to first teach in its Jewish synagogues, which were open for people to talk about God 24 hours a day, seven days a week, offering a ready-made pulpit for the evangelist. Next, Paul would implement marketplace ministry by making tents and teaching about God among the people both day and night, many of whom were traveling through the cities where he worked (see 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8).

The theme of Paul's letters is peace, a theology of reconciliation of man with God that can be lived out in harmonious relationships (2 Corinthians 5:14-21). Paul described Jesus as the peace of God (see Ephesians 2:14). He also referenced the Almighty as the God of peace (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23) and the Holy Spirit as providing us peace (see Romans 5:1-5). Paul taught that when we are in a fully surrendered relationship with the triune God, we experience peace within our souls (see Philippians 4:6-7) and are equipped to share the gospel of peace (see Ephesians 6:15).

**Early Epistles**

**Galatians**

Date: 45-48 AD

To: Either to the north or south Galatian churches. Paul visited those in the south where he studied eleven years. Galatians originated in France.

Personal: Freedom in Christ (Galatians 1:1-2:21)

Doctrinal: Christ's Atoning Death (Galatians 3:1-4:11)

Practical: Application of Freedom (Galatians 4:12-6:5)

New Life (Galatians 6:6-18)

Key Verses:

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

#### *Street Smarts for The Restoration Road*

Memorize two or more of the key verses from Galatians. Recite them daily, seeing each encounter through the lenses of these timeless truths. You will sense God’s presence and live in His power as He uses you to bring His restoration to others.

## **1 Thessalonians**

Date: 50-53 AD

To: The Church in Thessalonica, a city founded by Cassander, General for Alexander the Great, and named after his wife who was King Philip of Macedon’s daughter and Alexander the Great’s half-sister. In 146 BC, it became the capital of Macedonia, and by 42 BC, a free city governed by a group of five or six of its own local rulers (see Acts 17:6-8). Just prior to the Paul’s writing, he visited and planted the local church during his second missionary journey (see Acts 17:1-10). Its population totaled about 200,000 people. Cabrius was the chief cult of the city, promoted by the wealthy and those ruling it to ensure their power. It also enjoyed a large enough community of Jewish people to support a synagogue (see Acts 17:1).

Belief of God’s People (1 Thessalonians 1:1-3:13)

Behavior of God’s People (1 Thessalonians 4:1-5:22)

Key Verses:

“We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 1:3).

“And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone” (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

“Be joyful always; <sup>17</sup> pray continually; <sup>18</sup> give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

#### *Street Smarts for The Restoration Road*

Faith works. Love labors. Hope endures. When we are in Christ, we experience faith, love, and hope in a spirit of joy, prayer, and gratitude. Is there someone in your life who needs hope only discovered in Christ? Let them see your joy. Pray for them daily to surrender to Christ. Give thanks for your circumstances, including the opportunity to be used by God to draw them to His living hope.

## **2 Thessalonians**

Date: 50-53 AD

To: The Church in Thessalonica

Suffering (2 Thessalonians 1:1-12)

Sin (2 Thessalonians 2:1-12)

Chosen (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17)  
Prayer (2 Thessalonians 3:1-5)  
Work (2 Thessalonians 3:6-18)

Key Verse:

“May the Lord direct your hearts into God’s love and Christ’s perseverance” (2 Thessalonians 3:5).

*Street Smarts for The Restoration Road*

When was the last time you had to persevere through a difficult challenge? How did you feel? Is there someone you know who is experiencing a conflict and could use help to endure? Ask the Holy Spirit to direct your heart into God’s love to help them persevere.

## **General Epistles**

### **Romans**

Date: 57 AD  
To: Roman believers

Sin (Romans 1:1-3:20)  
Salvation (Romans 3:21-5:21)  
Sanctification (Romans 6:1-8:39)  
Sovereignty (Romans 9:1-11:36)  
Service (Romans 12:1-16:27)

Key Verses:

“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. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Romans 1:16-17).

*Street Smarts for The Restoration Road*

How bold are you with the gospel of Christ? Are you willing to be used by God to engage in life-altering conversations with those who are outside an eternal relationship with Him? Write your story of coming to faith in 200 words or less. Make a list of names representing those God has intersected with your path. Begin to share your story with them.

### **1 Corinthians**

Date: 55 AD  
To: The Church in Corinth, capital of the Roman province, Achaia, considered the most important city in Greece. It had been destroyed in 146 BC by the Roman army and was rebuilt by Julius Caesar. Half the population was enslaved. *Corinthian* meant “to live in looseness, heavy drinking, or immorality.”

Divisions (1 Corinthians 1:1-4:21)  
Direction (1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20)  
Marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1-40)  
Church (1 Corinthians 8:1-10:33)  
Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:1-34)  
Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40)  
Eternity (1 Corinthians 15:1-58)

Key Verses:

“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13).

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

*Street Smarts for The Restoration Road*

In order to be a good leader, one must be a great follower. Who are you following? How would those closest to you describe your followership and your leadership? When was the last time you said, “I love you,” to your spouse and your children? Covenant with God to end every conversation in your immediate family with these three words.

**2 Corinthians**

Date: 55 AD

To: The Church in Corinth

Comfort (2 Corinthians 1:1-2:11)

Treasures (2 Corinthians 2:12-5:10)

Relationships (2 Corinthians 5:11-7:1)

Gifts (2 Corinthians 7:2-9:15)

Work (2 Corinthians 10:1-11:33)

Paradise (2 Corinthians 12:1-13:13)

Key Verses:

“For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows” (2 Corinthians 1:5).

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

*Street Smarts for The Restoration Road*

God’s grace in Christ empowers us to comfort those who are suffering because we cannot take credit for the undeserved love He has lavished on us. Who can you comfort with the grace of Christ? Write down that person’s name and schedule a time on your calendar to connect this week.