

THE COMPLETE
PAUL

A NEW ARRANGEMENT
of the APOSTLE'S WORDS

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INTRODUCTION

This book is intended to serve as a reader's edition to the words of the apostle Paul, as helpfully indicated by the title. If the quite familiar Paul can be made *fresh* as well as familiar, then the basic goal of this project will have been achieved. But a few words of explanation are still in order, as I did not simply assemble all of Paul's epistles in canonical order, stitching them together end-to-end. That would not be a bad thing in itself, but hardly worth publishing in a separate volume. That much could be obtained simply by reading Paul's letters in a particular order in your regular Bible. Instead, this is an involved collation of sorts.

Here is how this collation was done. I took the book of Romans to serve as the spine of this project, and then inserted passages from all his other epistles and portions of Acts in such a way as to fit within the structure of the book of Romans. It is a testimony to the greatness of *that* book that there was a natural place for pretty much every passage to go.

Many before me have noticed the characteristics of the book of Romans that would make it suitable for a project like this. Philip Melancthon said Romans was the "compendium of all Christian doctrine,"¹ and structured his own first systematic work after the Apostle's.

Luther felt the same way: “This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel . . . it seems that St. Paul, in writing this letter, wanted to compose a summary of the whole of Christian and evangelical teaching which would also be an introduction to the whole Old Testament.”ⁱⁱ Frederic Godet memorably called it the “cathedral of Christian faith,”ⁱⁱⁱ and Calvin considered it a “sure road” for understanding all the rest of Scripture.^{iv} If anyone still doubts it is a worthy book to use in organizing all Paul’s writings, then let Tyndale have the last word: “I think it meet that every Christian man not only know [Romans], by rote and without the book, but also exercise himself therein evermore continually, as with the daily bread of the soul. No man verily can read it too oft, or study it too well; for the more it is studied, the easier it is; the more it is chewed, the pleasanter it is.”^v

So when it comes to understanding Paul, Romans is *the* book to master. And to return to Godet’s image of a cathedral, what I have done is taken the magnificent structure of that great cathedral, and have fashioned all the stained glass windows out of his other words from all his other epistles.

In other words, this is a collation of all the words that are reliably *attributed* to the apostle Paul by Scripture. Framing the project in this way solves the problem of the book of Hebrews, which I take as Pauline in some important sense, but which other believing scholars don’t.

But in any case, no explicit statement in Scripture is made about the authorship of that particular book, and so I felt free to treat it as *unattributed* to Paul. But all the other epistles, unbelieving scholarship notwithstanding, are attributed to Paul by the words of Scripture itself, and this means that, for faithful believers, all those books must be accepted as being from Paul. This book is therefore a collation of thirteen epistles and those passages from Acts that record the words of Paul *as* the words of Paul. In the nature of the case, words contributed by Silvanus, Timothy, and Sosthenes are also included. Those would be indicated with a footnote if we knew which ones they were.

I did all this rearranging beginning with the King James Version of the English text, and when I had something big enough to work with, I began modernizing and adjusting the language, and working on the transitions. The end result of this is what I trust is a coherent rendering of Paul's thought in a way that reflects both a dynamic equivalence approach to the meaning of the text, and a systematic approach to his theology.

But this also requires explanation. First, by using the phrase *dynamic equivalence*, I do not mean to indicate that this work represents in any way a fresh translation from the Greek. This collation is *not* being presented as a *translation* of the original Greek. This is simply an interpretive rendering of Paul's thought in the form of a "reader's edition." While I did check the Greek occasionally, I

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GRACE AND PEACE

Paul,¹ a prisoner and apostle of Jesus Christ² and a servant of God and of³ Jesus Christ, by the will of God⁴ and by the commandment of God our Savior, and the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is according to godliness,⁵ which is our hope,⁶ according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus,⁷ called to be an apostle,⁸ an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,⁹ not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and by God the Father, who raised Him from the dead;¹⁰ separated unto the gospel of God—which He had promised beforehand by His prophets in the Holy Scriptures—concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.¹¹

This is all in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began, but which He has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which is committed to me according to the command of God our Savior.¹²

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience unto the faith among all nations, for His name, to which I was ordained a preacher and an apostle. I speak

the truth in Christ, and do not lie. I was made a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth,¹³ among whom are you also the called of Jesus Christ.¹⁴

To all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints;¹⁵ to Timothy, my own dearly beloved¹⁶ son in the faith;¹⁷ to Titus, my own son in our common faith;¹⁸ to the churches of Galatia,¹⁹ to the saints and faithful brothers²⁰ who are in Ephesus and Colossae, and who are the faithful in Christ Jesus;²¹ and to the church of the Thessalonians, which is in God our Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ,²² and to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia: to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all those who in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.²³

Grace to you, mercy²⁴ and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ,²⁵ our Lord,²⁶ our Savior,²⁷ the one who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.²⁸

From Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy our brother, and Sosthenes our brother,²⁹ and all the brethren which are with me.³⁰ Timothy our brother and I, servants of Jesus Christ,³¹ greet Philemon our dearly beloved, and fellow-laborer, and our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellow-soldier, and to the church in your house,³² as well as all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, together

with the bishops and deacons.³³ For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints are refreshed by you, brother.³⁴

DEEP THANKS

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, in that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.³⁵ I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith, which you have toward the Lord Jesus, and toward all saints, that the fellowship of your faith may be efficacious by the acknowledgment of every good thing which you have in Christ Jesus.³⁶

I thank my God for every memory of you, always in every prayer for you making my requests with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now. I do this confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it at the day of Jesus Christ. It is fitting for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart—because both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of my grace. For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all in the compassion of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound even more and more in knowledge and in all discernment; so that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without blame until the day of Christ, and that you may be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.³⁷

We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ever since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have for all the saints. This comes from the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, which you heard about in the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has to all the world, bringing forth fruit, as it has also in you, since the day you first heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth. You learned this from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ, and who also declared to us your love in the Spirit.³⁸

We are bound always to thank God for you, brothers, as it is fitting, because your faith grows greatly, and the love of each one of you all toward each other abounds. So then we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that you might be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which reason you now suffer, seeing that it is a righteous thing for God to recompense tribulation to those who trouble you.³⁹

But we are bound to give thanks to God for you always, as brothers beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you for salvation through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth. This is how He called you by our gospel, to obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brothers, stand fast, and hold fast the traditions which you have been taught,