

# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

Keith:

“Become part of a global apostolic network, and God will bless.”

To do that, we must fully participate. What does that take?

What does it take to operate at full power?

# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

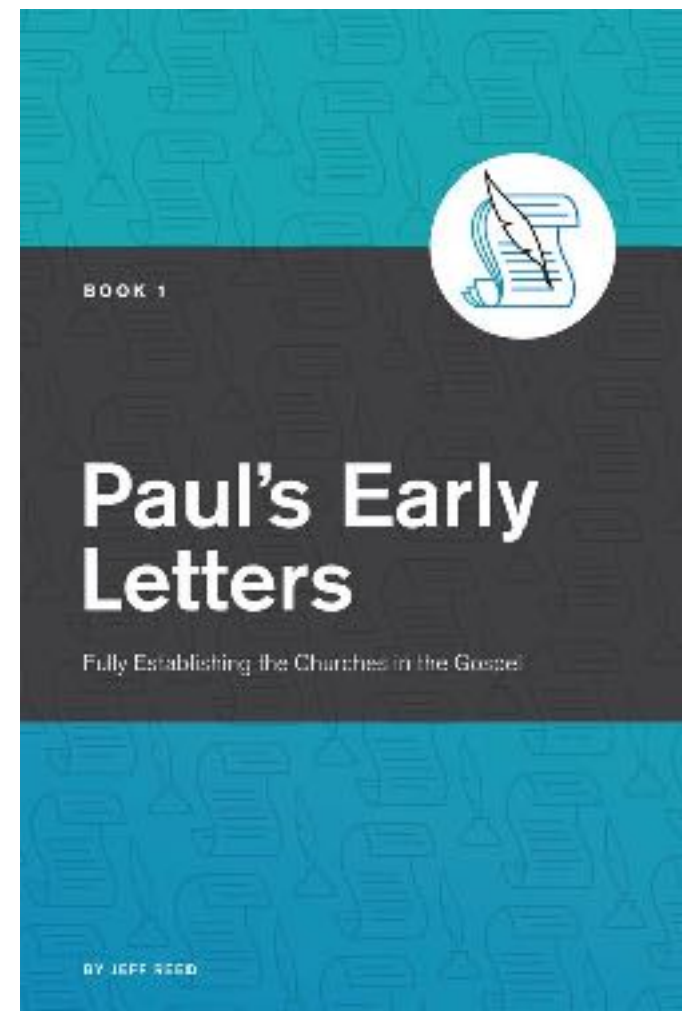
Issue: Fully participating with Paul in the progress of the gospel

Questions:

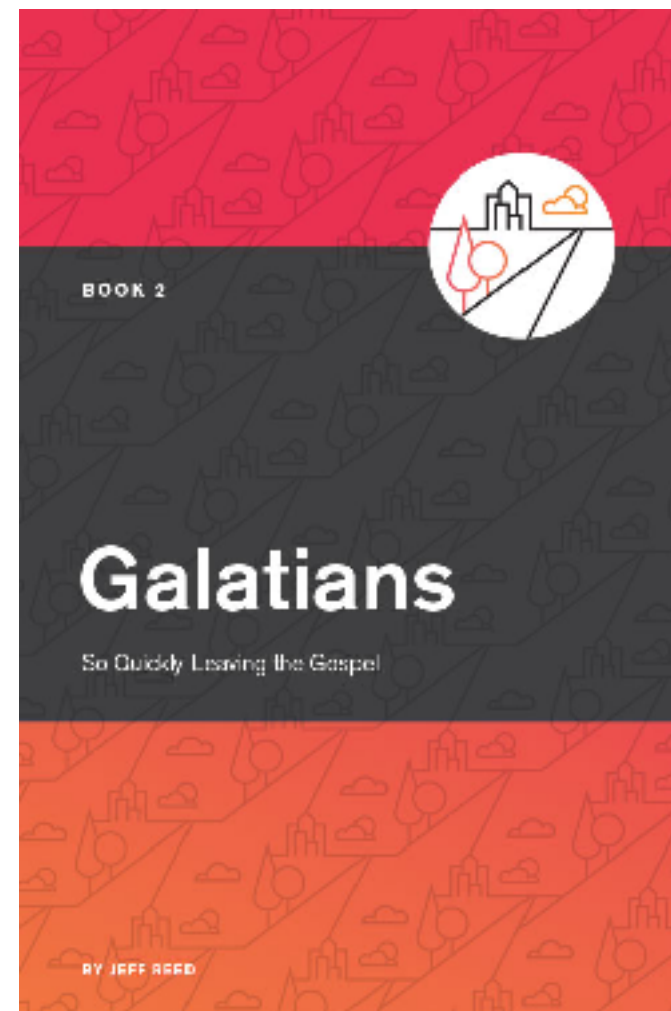
1. This letter is not theological in the same sense that Ephesians and Colossians were. Why was it included in the collection?
2. How does it contribute to the vision of the centrality of the Church as Christ's grand strategy, which was unveiled through Paul in Ephesians and Colossians?
3. What problems were emerging in the Philippian churches that caused Paul to write this letter?
4. In what sense is the church at Philippi a prototype for all churches fully participating in the progress of the gospel?



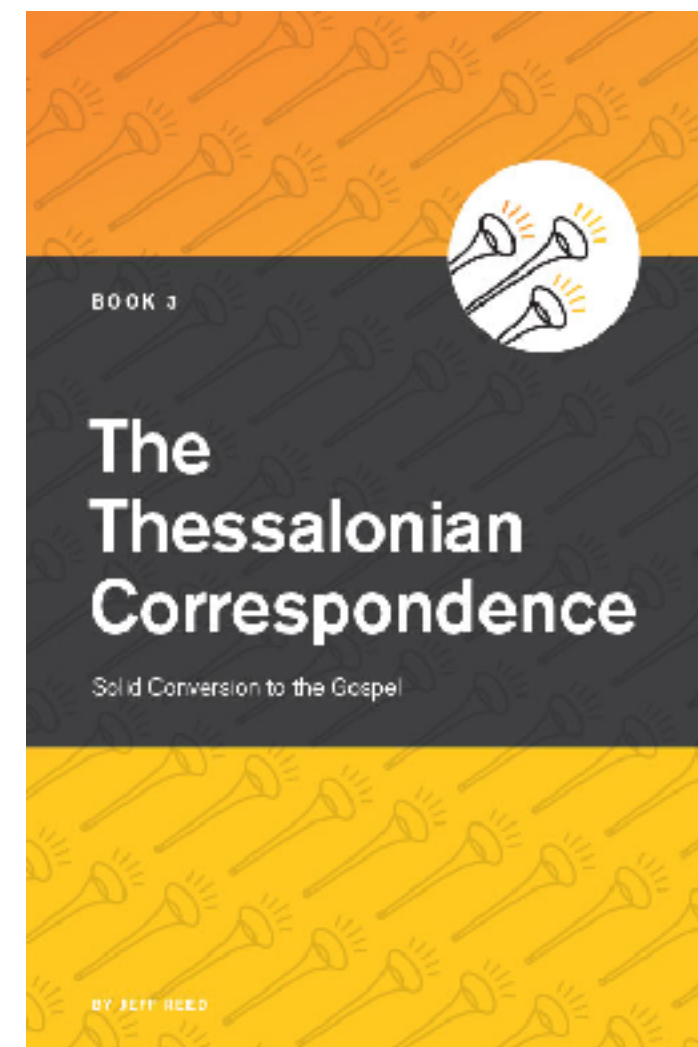
# Paul's Early Letters



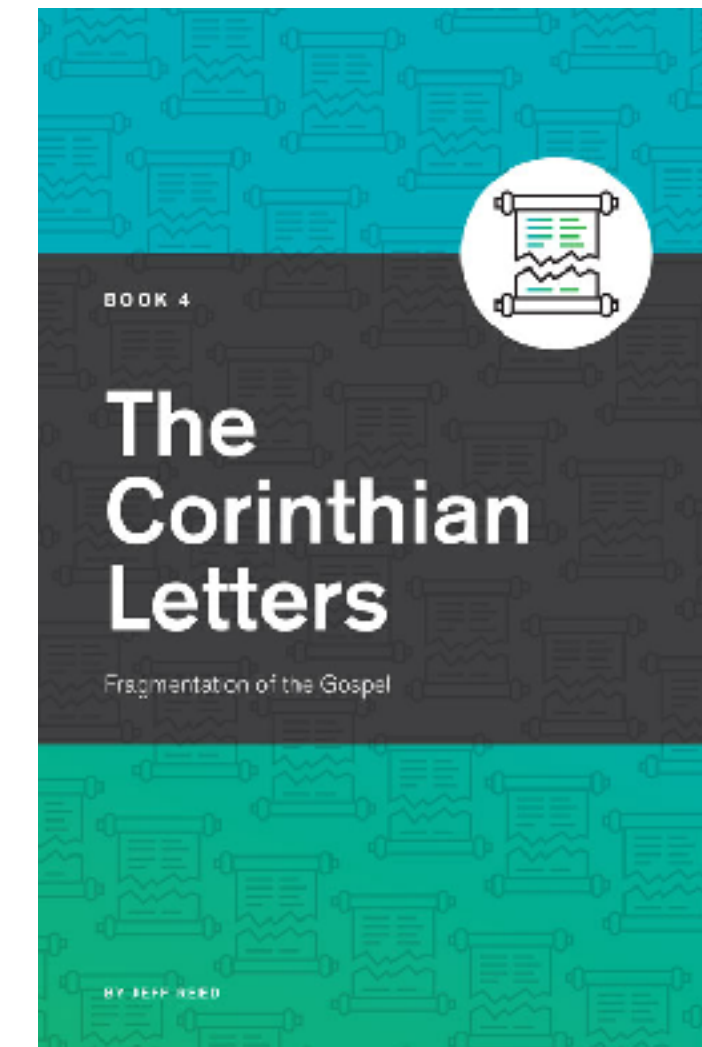
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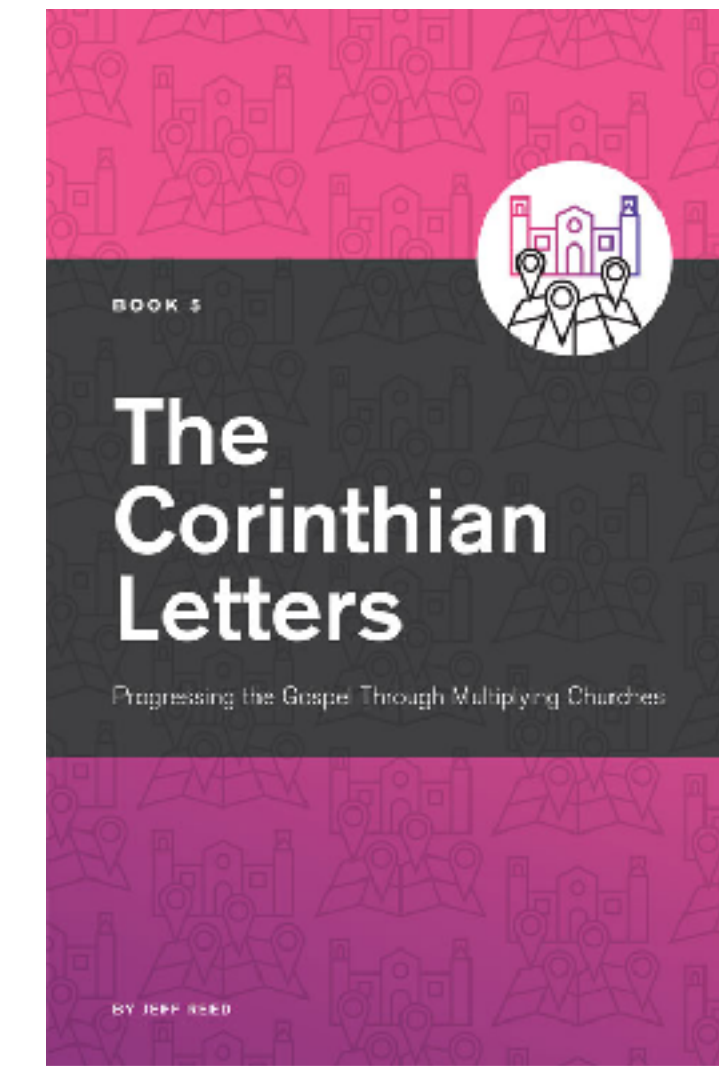
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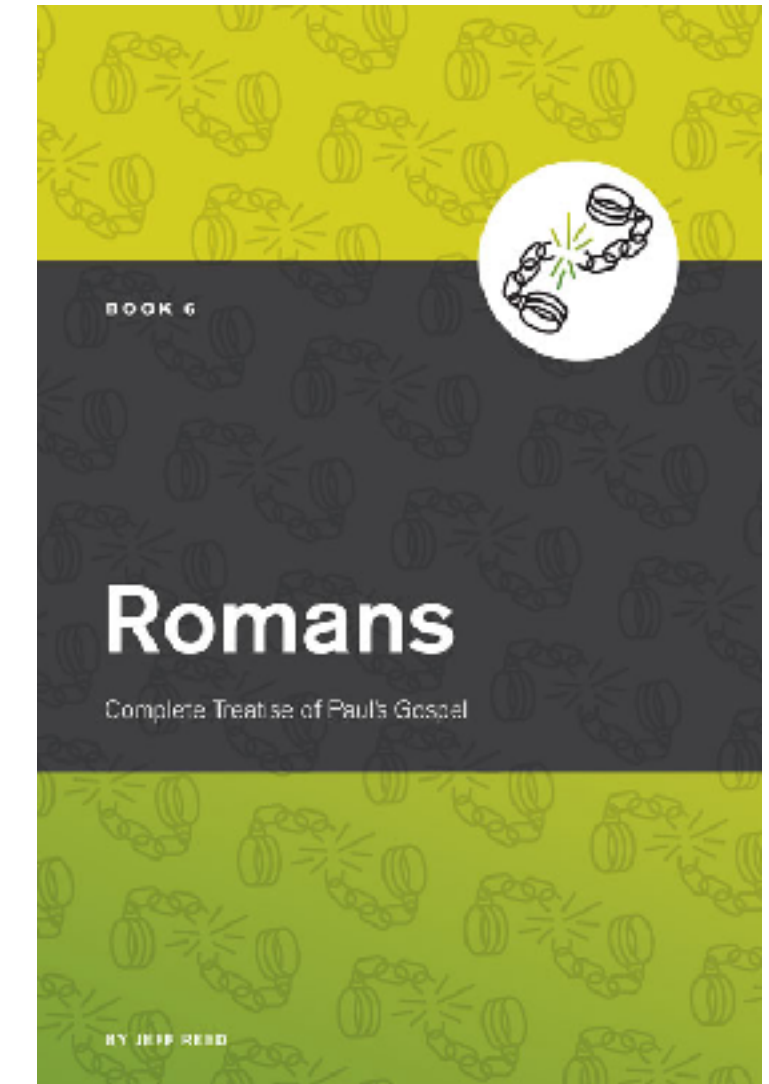
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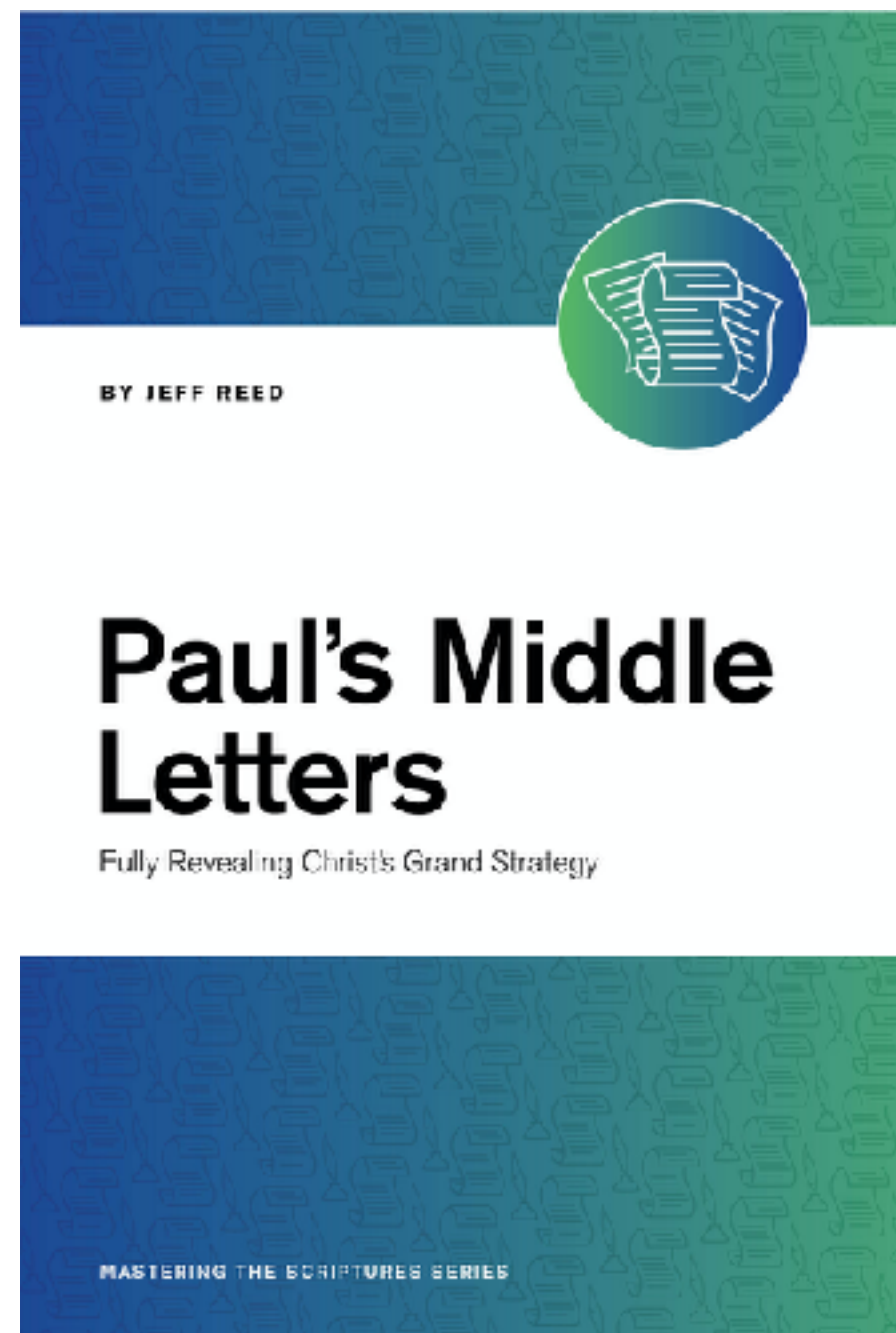


Nov. 56





# Paul's Middle Letters



Feb. 60 to March 62



Autumn 60



Autumn 61



Spring 62



# Paul's Middle Letters

## New Testament Theology

It is critical that we treat these letters as a collection within Paul's larger collection.

These letters build on each other as they unfold. And while they each stand alone as a letter to a particular set of churches, they all deal with similar issues that together present a very clear picture of establishing churches in Christ's grand strategy, including a full picture of the centrality of church networks in that strategy.



# New Perspective on Paul

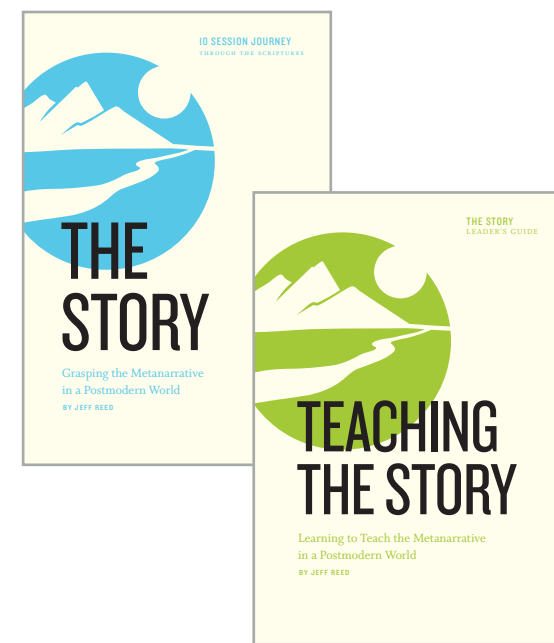
## Old Perspective on Paul

Paul's letters contain miscellaneous, often unrelated topics, that would be useful for future believers, especially in dealing with sin, salvation, and living the Christian life. These topics are a significant part of today's ever growing systematic theologies.

## New Perspective on Paul

Paul's letters form a coherent, interlocking shape, foundational for churches in any generation to fully understand Christ's grand strategy of the Church being central to His unfolding kingdom and to living in full alignment of that grand strategy.

# New Perspective on Paul



**Kerygma**  
**Early Acts**  
**Apostles' Teaching**  
**6 months**  
**Paul: 3 years "night and day"**



**Didache**  
**Body of Acts**  
**Theology of Paul**  
**1½ years**

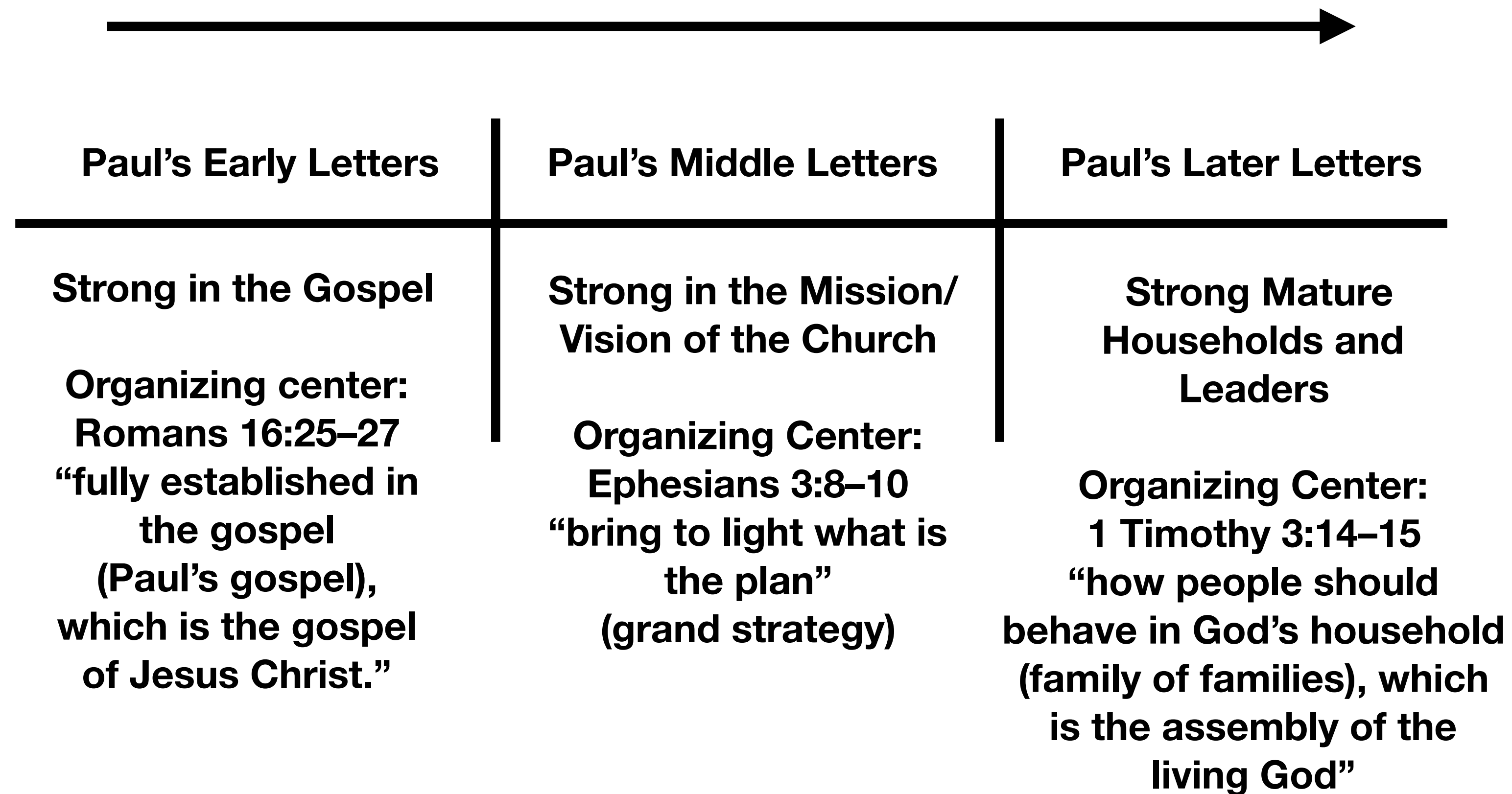


**Full Kerygma**  
**After Acts**  
**Apostles' Gospels**  
**1 year**



# Paul's Early, Middle, and Later Letters

## The Process of Building Strong Churches





# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## **Ephesians – Hub Churches**

Ephesians: A manifesto revealing Christ's "grand strategy" — the Church — to his key "hub" churches in Ephesus, with special attention to training the elders of this strategic city in the whole plan of Christ for an entire 3-year period.

# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## Colossians—Cluster Churches

Colossians: An almost identical letter to Ephesians (along with Philemon), written to the house churches scattered throughout the Lycus Valley (Colossae, Laodicea, and Hierapolis) one year after writing his “manifesto” to the Ephesian churches to help them, at a very practical level, to implement the new church paradigm in their network of churches—a model as a framework for the entire history of clusters of churches down through the centuries.

Philemon: To practically illustrate to the network of churches in the Lycus Valley the importance of Christ's grand strategy of the kingdom through the church and to restructure all their social relationships—including slavery—around the church as a family of families, the household social structure of the church, which was evident in the Greek “republic” ideal of the day but fully realized in the emerging kingdom of Jesus Christ.



# Introduction to Paul's Middle Letters

## Philippi—A Strategic Partner Church

Philippi: a strategic network of churches in Philippi that participated with Paul from its inception. After Paul's full and mature presentation in his letter to the Ephesians of the centrality of the Church as the heart of Christ's grand strategy for bringing in the kingdom, Philippians illustrates the importance of churches participating with one mind in the progress of the gospel through His grand strategy—the Church.

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

As you will see,

Ephesians—is mostly Christ's grand strategy and has a little on Paul's network.

Colossians–Philemon—is similar on Christ's grand strategy and has a lot on Paul's network.

Philippians—is mostly on participating in Christ's grand strategy through Paul's network.

All 4 letters use similar terminology and sort of work as one growing theology of Christ's vision and mission for His churches.





# Paul's Middle Letters

Fully Revealing Christ's Grand Strategy

# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians



Session 1: Fully Participating with Paul the Progress of the Gospel

Session 2: Participating with a One-Minded Focus

Session 3: Participating in the Power of the Resurrection

Session 4: Participating with Our Financial Resources

Session 5: Participating with Paul's Complex Apostolic Network



# Paul's Network and the Ephesus Hub, Lycus Valley Cluster

What is the essence of the contribution of the Middle Letters (before the addition of Philippians)?

The Middle Letters actually sit at the heart of Paul's emerging global apostolic network.

1. Paul's 3-fold strategy becomes clear: build your base (Ephesus), expand churches in the regional area around a hub church (hall of Tyrannus), and establish clusters as they emerge (Colossae, Hierapolis, Laodicea)—a very simple strategy.
2. Paul paid close attention to doing strategic practical theology amongst the churches, dealing with issues like slavery, based on pushing up the first principles of every issue.
3. Paul kept his heart for the churches pure, which includes a balance between frank speech and constant love for the churches (examples: Ephesian elders, Onesimus and Philemon).
4. Paul was willing to pay an inexhaustible price, constantly asking for prayer and support of the network (especially seen in Philippians).
5. Paul was not afraid to exercise apostolic authority in the churches, even amongst his strategic eldership.

# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

Now we turn to Philipppians — the last of Paul's Middle Letters

How does this unique letter build on Paul's 3 previous letters?

Why does he shift to a conversation exclusively devoted to their participation with him in the progress of the gospel?

In Philipppians, what do we learn about churches participating in the progress of the gospel? about our focus and sacrifice for that progress globally?

In Philipppians we get a fully development of what Paul meant by “participating with him in the progress of the gospel.” The entire letter was devoted to that. There is no sustained theological argument in the letter.

# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

Let's go back to our outline. What does it mean for this strategic church to fully participate with him? As you will see as this letter unfolds, that participation was to be a huge focus of the Philippian churches.

Fully Participating with Paul in the Progress of the Gospel 1:1–26

In these first verses, Paul lays the foundation for his coming challenge to more fully participate with him in the progress of the gospel. After praising them for their unique, focused participation with him, he reflects on his imprisonment as being key to that progress as he defends and proclaims the gospel.

He is very frank about his role and the importance of his imprisonment.



# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

## Participating with a One-Minded Focus 1:27–2:29

In this section of the letter, Paul challenges them to strive together with a focused, one minded, total commitment, participating with him in the progress of the gospel. He gives four examples of a focused, self-sacrificing, total commitment: Christ, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

## Participating in the Power of the Resurrection 3:1–4:9

Then he turns to that commitment being a life focus, a goal, as citizens of heaven, to “attain to the full power of the resurrection.” He builds on the power he wants for the Ephesian church, while acknowledging he himself has not fully attained it, a focus he models for them by everything in his life.

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

## Participating with Our Financial Resources 4:10–20

He then turns to an aspect of their financial gifts to him, showing how his total commitment shapes how he thinks about his own resources, providing a framework for their continued total commitment of their resources as well, which he has commented on throughout the letter up to this point.

## Participating with Paul's Complex Apostolic Network 4:21–23

In this final section, though only a short 3 verses, he ties them into the network he has unfolded in the first 3 books. And assuming that teaching, in this letter, he expands it enormously by completely focusing on the network participating with him in the progress of the gospel, tying it all together.

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Before we look at this first section, let me make one more comment about the letter. The entire letter is an example of the Greek concept of *parrēsia*, which is best defined as speaking with full confidence but can also be called “frank speech.”

The Philippian letter is full of Paul modeling frank speech—a speech that is honest—including a range of praise to calling out Euodia and Syntyche, two women coworkers in the church who are in conflict. It also includes frank discussion about his own imprisonment and his own qualifications.

This letter sets a model for top leaders to set a culture of honest, confident frank speech as part of their entire network culture. I will deal with this more when reflecting on the section including Euodia and Syntyche in 4:2.



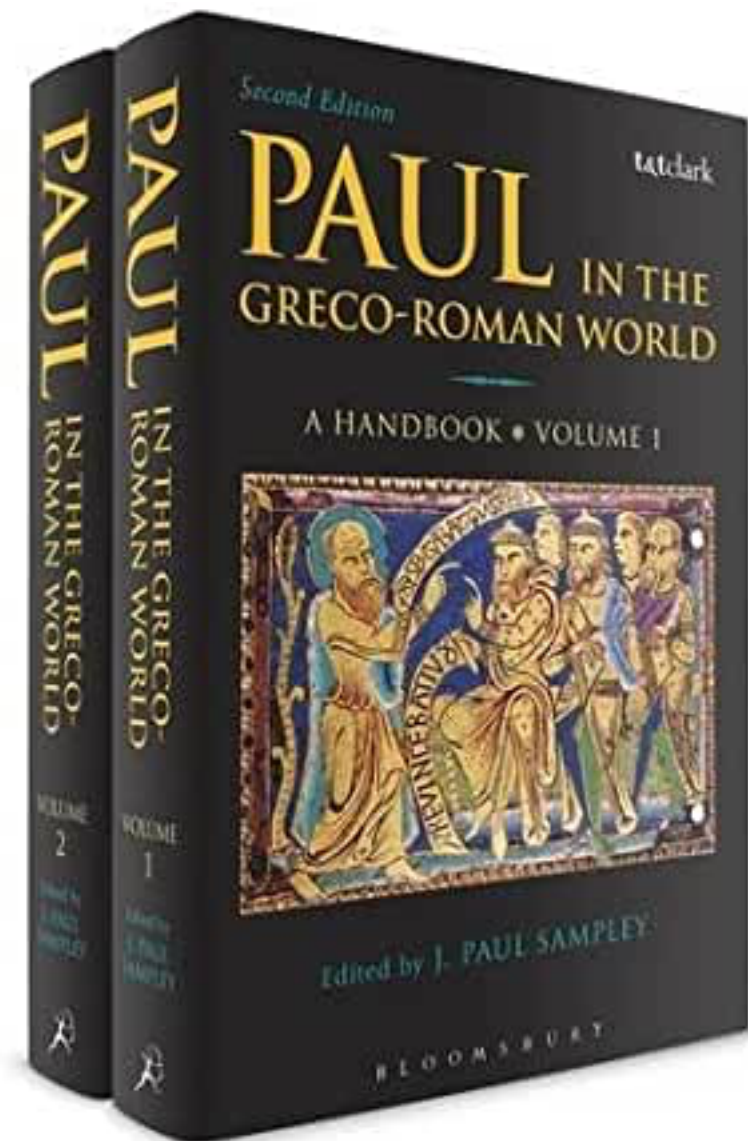
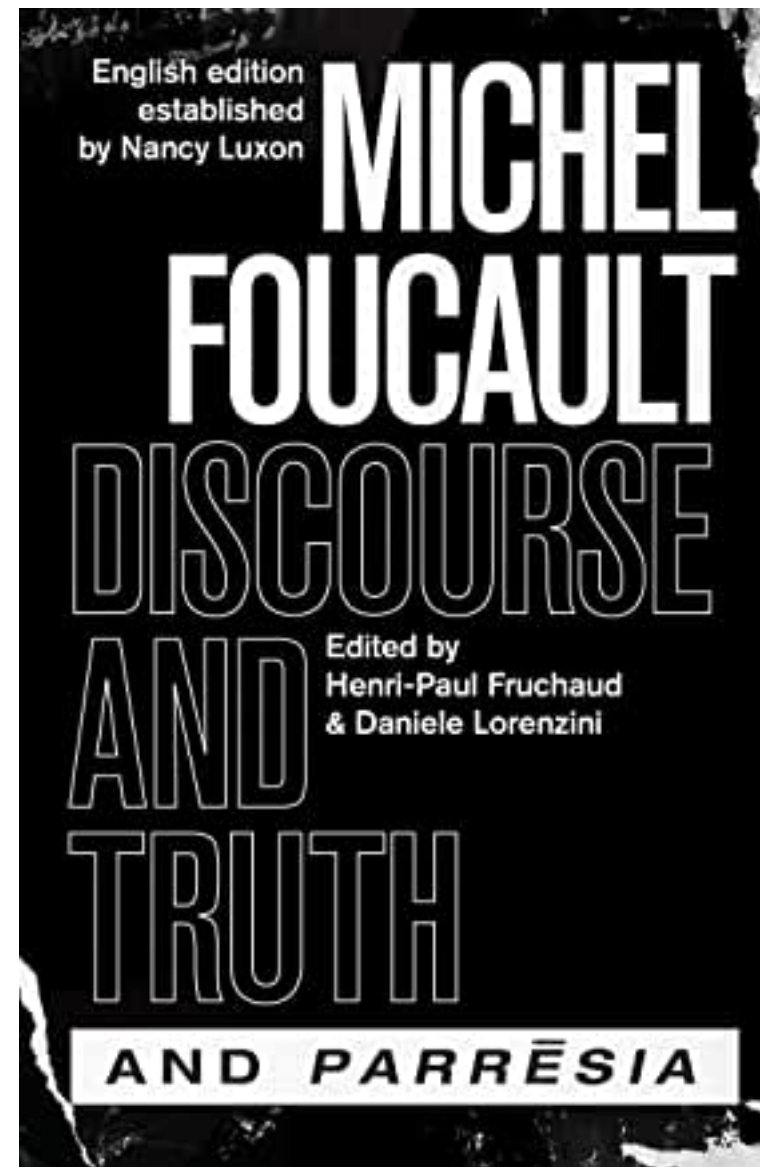
# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul uses the word *parrēsia* in 1:20:

His prayer is that his circumstances would increase his *parrēsia*: outspokenness, frankness, freedom of speech, confidence, plain speech, openness

Paul's circumstances created greater focus on the goal, greater urgency, and therefore, greater intensity on his churches becoming more focused.

# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians



For now, there are two articles I will draw on to expand this further:

1. “Parrēsia,” a lecture at the University of Grenoble, May 18, 1982, by Michel Foucault, in *Discourse and Truth and Parrēsia*
2. “Frankness in Philippians,” a section in “Paul and Frankness” (originally “Paul and Frank Speech”) in *Paul in the Greco–Roman World*

# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

<sup>1</sup> Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

<sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ

<sup>3</sup> I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup> constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup> because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup> to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup> having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:1–11



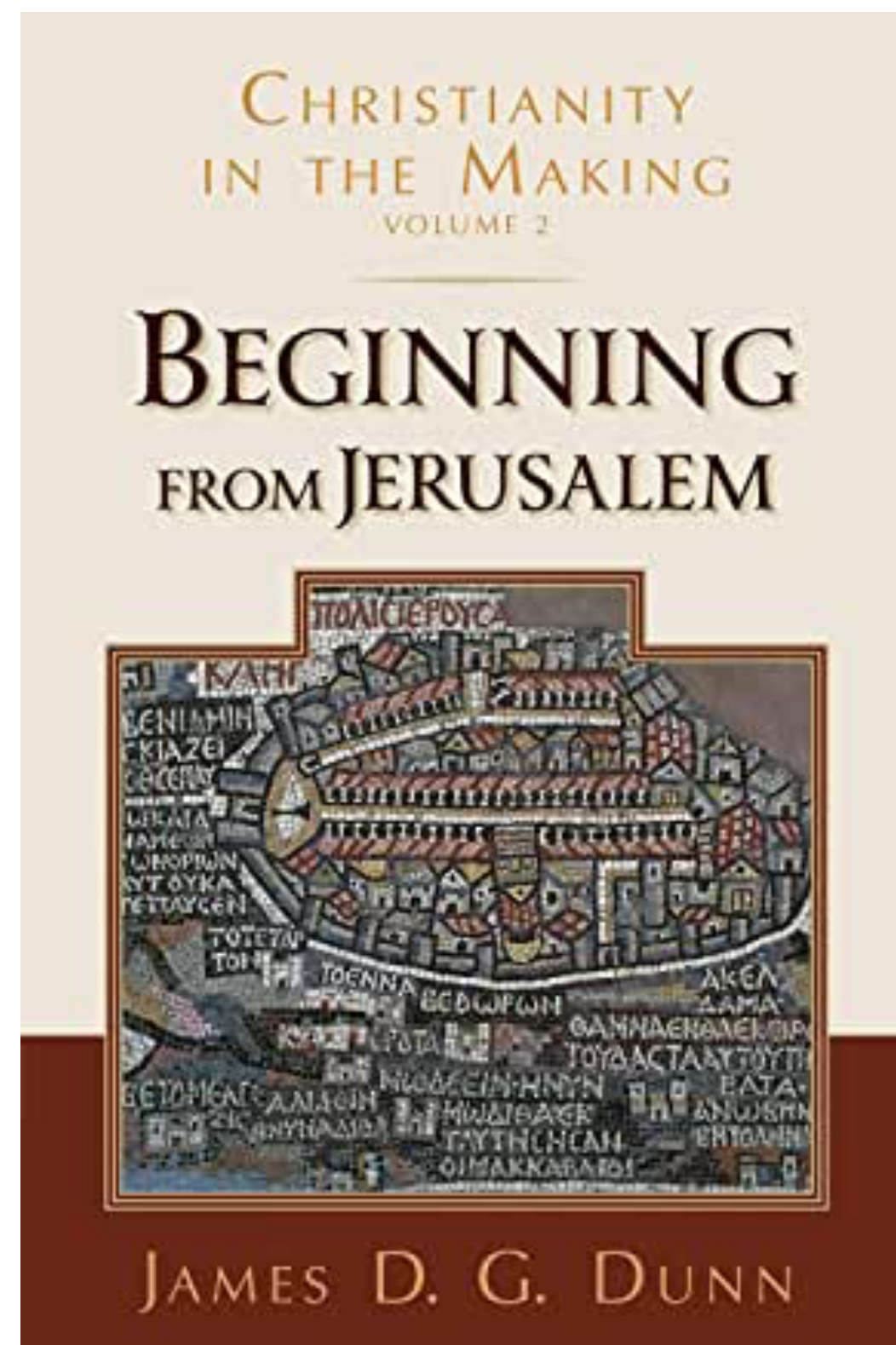
# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul praises them for “sharing in the gospel” from the first day until now.

The word *sharing* means close association, partnership, participation.

From the first day when he was invited to stay at Lydia's home—a benefactor who hosted him in her guest house—that was the beginning of a very strategic church which continued that level of participation until his writing of this letter.

# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians



Paul came to Philippi as the result of a vision he had while he was in Troas. He saw a "man of Macedonia" and heard him say "Come over . . . and help us." Immediately after the vision Paul and his party left off their attempts to go into Bithynia and decided instead to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called them to preach the gospel there (Acts 16:9–10). According to the Acts account the first convert to Christianity in Philippi was a woman, Lydia. Although Lydia was a pagan, she nevertheless was a God-fearing person who had been attracted to the lofty ideals of the Jewish religion (Acts 16:14). But when she heard Paul preach the gospel and, as Luke said, God opened her heart, she put her faith in Jesus Christ and along with her household was baptized (16:14–15). These people became the nucleus of the church at Philippi, and while meeting in the home of Lydia they showed great kindness in their generous hospitality to Paul and his companions, prevailing upon them to come and join this household and stay with them (Acts 16:15).



# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

Their partnership with Paul grew from that first day. And you will see, as the letter unfolds, their participation took on several aspects

- sending several financial gifts
- sending a personal assistant to Paul in his imprisonment
- several actually becoming coworkers as part of his team
- keeping up with his activities and needs, praying for him out of personal communication



# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

In light of that participation, Paul prays that their participation would continue to grow and that they would reach their full potential. He prayed specifically for these things:

- They would gain more and more insight (into their participation).
- They would complete every good work within their sphere of ministry.
- Their participation with him would deepen.
- They would experience a full harvest from this participation.

So it is clear, he has a long-term intent to see them reach all that God intends for them.

# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

<sup>12</sup> I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; <sup>14</sup> and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear.

<sup>15</sup> Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. <sup>16</sup> These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup> the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

Philippians 1:12–18

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul then puts his imprisonment into perspective as a vital part of the defense and progress of the gospel.

“what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel” v.12

How has it done that?

1. He actually started churches amongst the imperial guard.
2. His imprisonment became sort of a house arrest that allowed him to safely develop his apostolic team.
3. Brothers and sisters around and amongst him, who saw God work in this way, developed greater boldness.
4. Some took up his role and preached the gospel; some, with impure motives, preached the gospel in a way that increased their sphere (happy that Paul was imprisoned).



# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. <sup>20</sup> It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup> but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup> Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup> so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Philippians 1:19–26

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Paul developed greater perspective in his circumstance:

1. During his house arrests, he felt his ministry deepen and broaden as he saw the response of his network and the brothers and sisters (coworkers).
2. He recognized that if he died, that was real gain, but living was Christ, a greater focus on the goal, and attaining to the full power of the resurrection (coming in chapter 3); he was more focused on the prize of accomplishing all God intended for him.
3. He also recognized that if he remained—survived this, which he expected to do—his ministry was going to flourish even more.
4. He became even more committed to the progress of the Philippians' faith, thus this letter.

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

## Participation Perspectives

Even though there is no major theological treatise section in this letter—as there is in all of his other letters except Philemon—we will gain tremendous theological perspectives, important to fully participating in the progress of the gospel:

handling suffering, imprisonment

dealing with internal conflicts

becoming and remaining one-minded

keeping our focus on the goal

experiencing the full power of Christ in our lives and churches

thinking clearly about our resources and life situation

keeping our life accomplishments in perspective



# Paul's Middle Letters — Philipppians

## Participation Perspectives

This is an amazing letter. It is one big, on the ground, real-life conversation with the Philippian churches on what it means to fully participate in the progress of the gospel, to attain full power, and to be fully focused for a maximum harvest.

It gives insight into what it takes to fully participate in all that had been revealed in Ephesians and Colossians, keeping the one minded focus needed to really accomplish beyond what we even envision and plan (Ephesians 3 prayer).

# Paul's Middle Letters—Philippians

Participating as a Strategic Church in an Apostolic Network (what do we know so far?)

1. You must develop a partnership with a key apostolic leader and his vision and network.
2. You must build these ideas into new churches, from the first day.
3. You must commit to doing everything you can to assist the “Pauls” and their core leaders to help them pioneer: money, co-workers, etc.
4. The Pauls and their coworkers must be so focused that they are willing to die for their apostolic work of progressing the gospel through proclaiming and defending the gospel and building an apostolic network of key churches and leaders.
5. The progress of the apostolic leaders and their teams must be evident to participating strategic churches.
6. The Pauls and their teams must be committed to the long haul development of hubs, clusters, and strategic churches.
7. The relationships, communication, and frank speech culture must be constantly cultivated and nurtured to create a trust network.

# Paul's Middle Letters – Philippians

Issue: Fully participating in the progress of the gospel today

Questions:

1. What does it mean to fully participate in the progress of the gospel?
2. Can we fully participate in the progress of the gospel without being part of an apostolic network like that of the Philippian churches?
3. What does a church need to be doing “from the first day” of its birth?
4. In what sense does the church at Philippi serve as a prototype for our churches to be participating in the progress of the gospel?