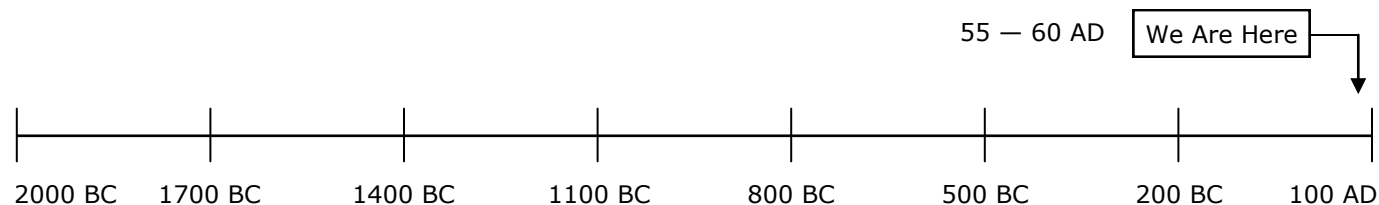


Unstained by the World

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Week 47: November 19-25 — *Acts 18, 19; 1 Corinthians; Romans*

90% Complete — 36 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Map of Paul's Missionary Journeys (p.121)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

The Apostle Paul has taken two trips and is currently on his third. By God's grace, this converted Pharisee and former enemy of the Christians preached the Gospel and established churches throughout Cyprus, Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece. His third journey was much like the second, starting at Antioch of Syria, visiting the area of Galatia, crossing over into Macedonia, and extending into Greece, with lengthy ministries in both Ephesus and Corinth. While in Ephesus, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians; while in Corinth, he wrote a letter to the church in Rome. We have both letters in our Bibles. Let's look at an overview of these letters as well as some of the applications for us.

A Letter to the Corinthians

Ancient Greece consisted of two major sections of land, Achaia in the north and Peloponnesus in the south. The thriving commercial city of Corinth lay on the narrow strip of land that connected the two. Corinth, unfortunately, was notorious for its immoral atmosphere. Thus, the church there struggled tremendously with maintaining its purity, much more its ministry. In his letter, Paul confronted some of their problems and offered godly solutions.

1. **We're All on the Same Team** (1:10-17; 3:3-9; 4:1): One of Satan's priorities has been to create division in the Church; much to his credit, he has been quite successful. Paul knew that as the Church is divided, so will its effectiveness be jeopardized.
2. **Unstained by the World** (1:18-2:16; 3:9-15; 5:1-13): The world is corrupt in all its ways, and it's vital that its influence doesn't find its way into the Church. Those impurities come in all shapes and sizes, from perverted philosophies to immoral lifestyles. Believers must be diligent to remain unstained by the world and, in turn, keep the Church pure.
3. **Control Your Freedom** (7:1-40; 8:1-13; 10:1-11:1): Some people say that since they are free in Christ, that they are free to sin. Why should we, who have been set free from sin be enslaved to sin again? Paul urged us to guard against unrestraint but to practice self-control under the Spirit's lead. Through the misuse of our freedom, we lead others astray.
4. **Proper Ways to Worship** (12:1-14:25): For the Church to function effectively, each believer must understand that he has been gifted differently by the Spirit to serve others in some capacity. However, those gifts are rendered useless without love as their motive.

A Letter to the Romans

Although Paul had not yet visited the church in Rome, he had heard about it and he was encouraged by its reputation. Although he planned on visiting the people there, Paul wanted to exhort their faith before his arrival. We will review the second half of *Romans* next week, but here are some truths concerning the topics of the first half — sin and salvation.

1. God must and will judge the world for its sin (1:18-2:16).
2. All of us have sinned; no one is exempt from judgment (3:9-23).
3. Salvation from judgment is not obtained by following the Law (2:17-29; 3:19, 20).
4. Salvation is only obtained as we trust in Christ to take away our sins (3:21-31).
5. Salvation comes through faith not works (3:27-5:11).
6. Adam brought sin into the world; Christ brought salvation (5:12-21).
7. In Christ, the Law has no power over us; we are now free in Him (6:1-23).
8. We are no longer slaves to sin, so then we should not act like slaves (6:1-23).
9. Though we are saved, our sinless spirit is trapped inside our sinful flesh (7:14-25).
10. Our flesh and spirit will constantly struggle; but, we can overcome in Christ (7:14-25).

No doubt, some of the meatier truths of the New Testament are found in the first half of *Romans*. Believers should know what Christ has done for us. We should grasp the hopeless state we once were in, the redemptive plan of God, the ministry of Christ, and the transformation that took place when we accepted His death on our behalf, but that is only the beginning. Now, we must walk step by step in our new lives, even grow to run in the freedom He has claimed for us. Sadly though, many of us do not see what He has done and remain enslaved to the ways of this world and the life-draining poison of sin. We wallow in the old life and never allow the Spirit to lead us on in the new. May we cease trying to battle sin in our own power and, instead, rest in the victorious life that Christ has secured for us.

The Bottom Line

Christ died to *purify* the Church; we must live in that *purity* and protect the Church from *impurity*.

Questions to Consider

1. In what ways has Satan divided the Church in the past? What are some ways that Satan is still trying to divide the Church today? What are the unfortunate consequences of division in the Church?
2. Why is it important for the Church to remain unstained by the world?
3. Though we are free in Christ, what are some ways that we could misuse our freedom?
4. Think back to your day of salvation and take time to thank God for what He has done.
5. What worldly way plagues you? What battle with sin does your spirit wage most often?
6. What are some ways that those around you can help you walk in that victorious life?