

- 1. Acknowledge your need for truth.**
- 2. Pray for divine assistance.**
- 3. Choose the right translation.**
- 4. Read the whole book.**

Basic Bible Study, Pt 1

Steps 1–4

REVIEW



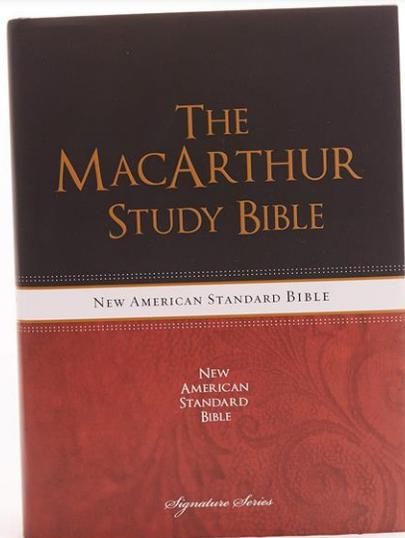
5. Consider the book's background.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture requires an awareness of the world of the writer and his original audience.



- This “world” involves five areas of focus:
 - 1) *Authorship* – Who wrote this book?
 - 2) *Date* – When did he write?
 - 3) *Location* – From where did he write?
 - 4) *Recipient* – To whom did he write?
 - 5) *Circumstance* – Why did he write?

- Start with the “Introduction” section in a Study Bible.



THE EPISTLE OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

TITLE

This epistle's name comes from its original recipients: the members of the church in Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire (1:7).

AUTHOR AND DATE

No one disputes that the apostle Paul wrote Romans. Like his namesake, Israel's first king (Saul was Paul's Hebrew name; Paul his Greek name), Paul was from the tribe of Benjamin (Php 3:5). He was also a Roman citizen (Ac 16:37; 22:25). Paul was born about the time of Christ's birth, in Tarsus (Ac 9:11), an important city (Ac 21:39) in the Roman province of Cilicia, located in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). He spent much of his early life in Jerusalem as a student of the celebrated rabbi Gamaliel (Ac 22:3). Like his father before him, Paul was a Pharisee (Ac 23:6), a member of the strictest Jewish sect (cf. Php 3:5).

Miraculously converted while on his way to Damascus (ca. A.D. 33–34) to arrest Christians in that city, Paul immediately began proclaiming the gospel message (Ac 9:20). After narrowly escaping from Damascus with his life (Ac 9:23–25; 2Co 11:32,33), Paul spent 3 years in Nabatean Arabia, south and east of the Dead Sea (Gal 1:17,18). During that time, he received much of his doctrine as direct revelation from the Lord (Gal 1:11,12).

More than any other individual, Paul was responsible for the spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire. He made 3 missionary journeys through much of the Mediterranean world, tirelessly preaching the gospel he had once sought to destroy (Ac 26:9). After he returned to Jerusalem bearing an offering for the needy in the church there, he was falsely accused by some Jews (Ac 21:27–29), savagely beaten by an angry mob (Ac 21:30,31), and arrested by the Romans. Though two Roman governors, Felix and Festus, as well as Herod Agrippa, did not find him guilty of any crime, pressure from the Jewish leaders kept Paul in Roman custody. After two years, the apostle exercised his right as a Roman citizen and appealed his case to Caesar. After a harrowing trip (Ac 27,28), including a violent, two-week storm at sea that culminated in a shipwreck, Paul reached Rome. Eventually released for a brief period of ministry, he was arrested again and suffered martyrdom at Rome in ca. A.D. 65–67 (cf. 2Ti 4:6).

Though physically unimpressive (cf. 2Co 10:10; Gal 4:14), Paul possessed an inner strength granted him through the Holy Spirit's power (Php 4:13). The grace of God proved sufficient to provide for his every need (2Co 12:9,10), enabling this noble servant of Christ to successfully finish his spiritual race (2Ti 4:7).

Paul wrote Romans from Corinth, as the references to Phoebe (Ro 16:1, Cenchrea was Corinth's port), Gaius (Ro 16:23), and Erastus (Ro 16:23)—all of whom were associated with Corinth—indicate. The apostle wrote the letter toward the close of his third missionary journey (most likely in A.D. 56), as he prepared to leave for Palestine with an offering for the poor believers in the Jerusalem church (Ro 15:25). Phoebe was given the great responsibility of delivering this letter to the Roman believers (16:1,2).

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Rome was the capital and most important city of the Roman Empire. It was founded in 753 B.C., but is not mentioned in Scripture until NT times. Rome is located along the banks of the Tiber River, about 15 miles from the Mediterranean Sea. Until an artificial harbor was built at nearby Ostia, Rome's main harbor was Puteoli, some 150 miles away (see note on Ac 28:13). In Paul's day, the city had a population of over one million people, many of whom were slaves. Rome boasted magnificent buildings, such as the Emperor's palace, the Circus Maximus, and the Forum, but its beauty was marred by the slums in which so many lived. According to tradition, Paul was martyred outside Rome on the Ostian Way during Nero's reign (A.D. 54–68).

Some of those converted on the Day of Pentecost probably founded the church at Rome (cf. Ac 2:10). Paul had long sought to visit the Roman church, but had been prevented from doing so (1:13). In God's providence, Paul's inability to visit Rome gave the world this inspired masterpiece of gospel doctrine.

Paul's primary purpose in writing Romans was to teach the great truths of the gospel of grace to believers who had never received apostolic instruction. The letter also introduced him to a church where he was personally unknown, but hoped to visit soon for several important reasons: to edify the believers (1:11); to preach the gospel (1:15); and to get to know the Roman Christians, so they could encourage him (1:12; 15:32), better pray for him (15:30), and help him with his planned ministry in Spain (15:28).



Unlike some of Paul's other epistles (e.g., 1, 2Co, Gal), his purpose for writing was not to correct aberrant theology or rebuke ungodly living. The Roman church was doctrinally sound, but, like all churches, it was in need of the rich doctrinal and practical instruction this letter provides.

HISTORICAL AND THEOLOGICAL THEMES

Since Romans is primarily a work of doctrine, it contains little historical material. Paul does use such familiar OT figures as Abraham (chap. 4), David (4:6–8), Adam (5:12–21), Sarah (9:9), Rebekah (9:10), Jacob and Esau (9:10–13), and Pharaoh (9:17) as illustrations. He also recounts some of Israel's history (chaps. 9–11). Chapter 16 provides insightful glimpses into the nature and character of the first-century church and its members.

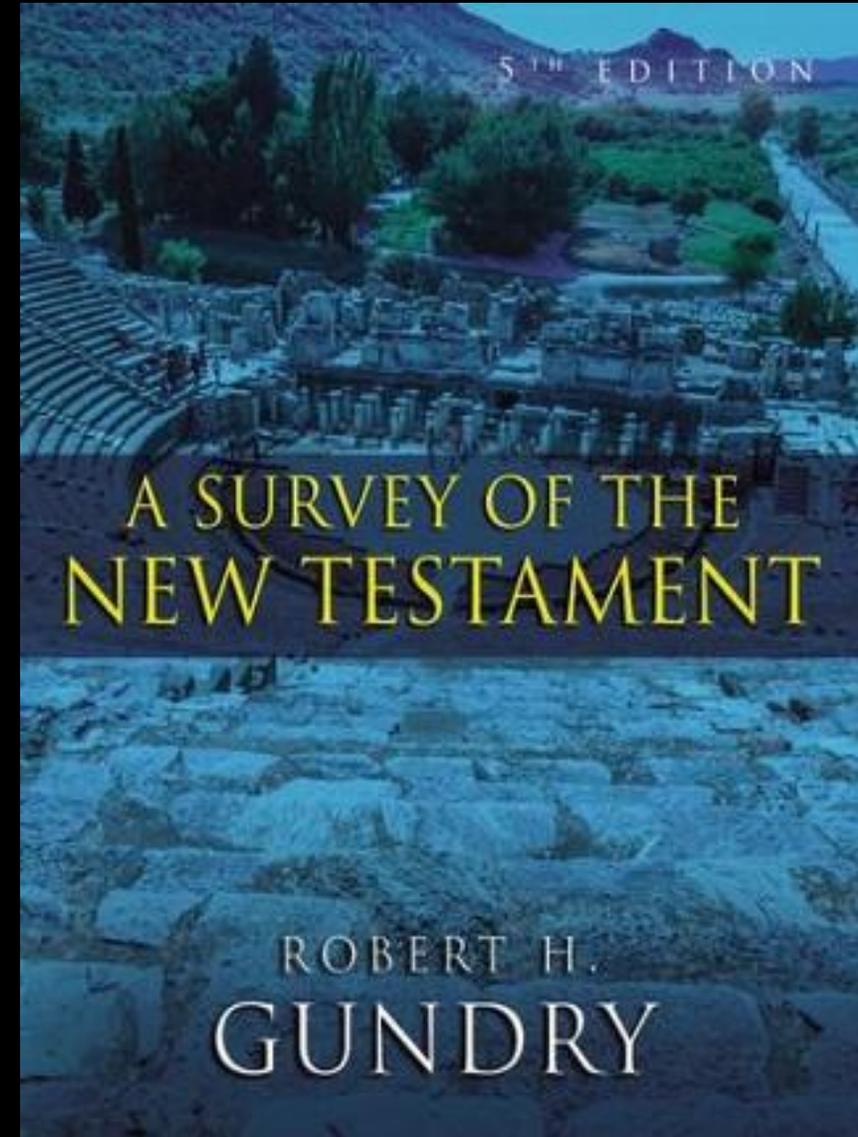
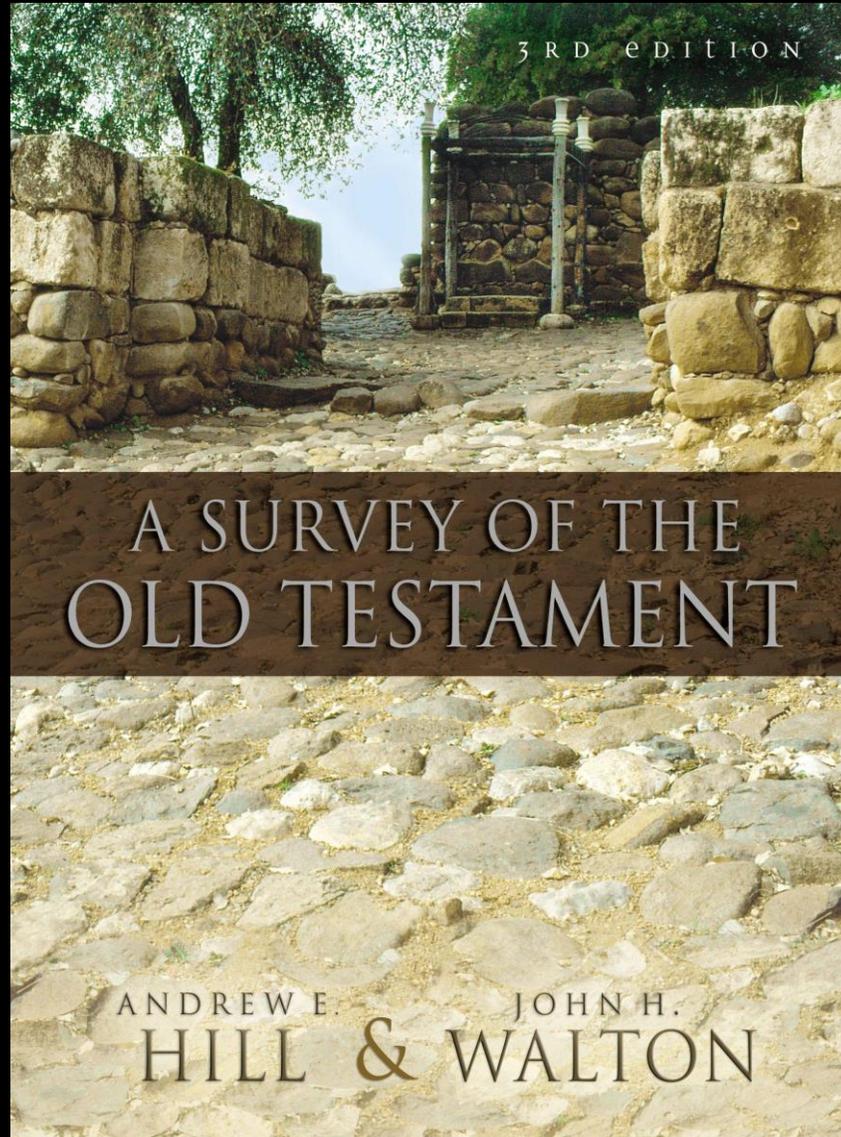
The overarching theme of Romans is the righteousness that comes from God: the glorious truth that God justifies guilty, condemned sinners by grace alone through faith in Christ alone. Chapters 1–11 present the theological truths of that doctrine, while chaps. 12–16 detail its practical outworking in the lives of individual believers and the life of the whole church. Some specific theological topics include principles of spiritual leadership (1:8–15); God's wrath against sinful mankind (1:18–32); principles of divine judgment (2:1–16); the universality of sin (3:9–20); an exposition and defense of justification by faith alone (3:21–4:25); the security of salvation (5:1–11); the transference of Adam's sin (5:12–21); sanctification (chaps. 6–8); sovereign election (chap. 9); God's plan for Israel (chap. 11); spiritual gifts and practical godliness (chap. 12); the believer's responsibility to human government (chap. 13); and principles of Christian liberty (14:1–15:12).

INTERPRETIVE CHALLENGES

As the preeminent doctrinal work in the NT, Romans naturally contains a number of difficult passages. Paul's discussion of the perpetuation of Adam's sin (5:12–21) is one of the deepest, most profound theological passages in all of Scripture. The nature of mankind's union with Adam, and how his sin was transferred to the human race has always been the subject of intense debate. Bible students also disagree on whether 7:7–25 describes Paul's experience as a believer or unbeliever, or is a literary device not intended to be autobiographical at all. The closely related doctrines of election (8:28–30) and the sovereignty of God (9:6–29) have confused many believers. Others question whether chaps. 9–11 teach that God has a future plan for the nation of Israel. Some have ignored Paul's teaching on the believer's obedience to human government (13:1–7) in the name of Christian activism, while others have used it to defend slavish obedience to totalitarian regimes.

All of these and more interpretive challenges are addressed in the notes to the respective passages.

- Read the related section in a Bible Survey.



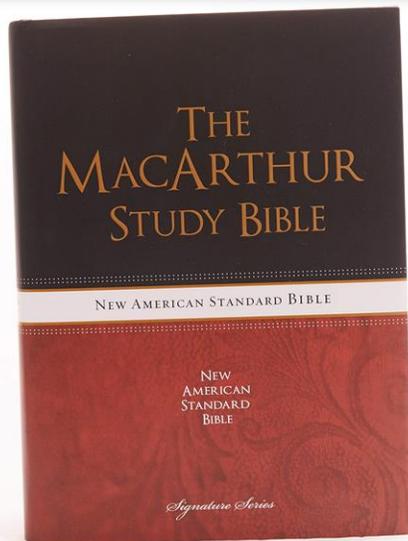
6. Identify the book's structure.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture considers the particular manner in which the writer organized his writing.



- The focus here is on recognizing the book's literary skeleton or outline.
- This literary outline will remind the reader to consider how each text fits into the flow of the entire book.

- Consult the “Introduction” section in a Study Bible or good commentary.



OUTLINE

- I. Greetings and Introduction (1:1-15)
- II. Theme (1:16,17)
- III. Condemnation: The Need of God's Righteousness (1:18-3:20)
 - A. Unrighteous Gentiles (1:18-32)
 - B. Unrighteous Jews (2:1-3:8)
 - C. Unrighteous Mankind (3:9-20)
- IV. Justification: The Provision of God's Righteousness (3:21-5:21)
 - A. The Source of Righteousness (3:21-31)
 - B. The Example of Righteousness (4:1-25)
 - C. The Blessings of Righteousness (5:1-11)
 - D. The Imputation of Righteousness (5:12-21)
- V. Sanctification: The Demonstration of God's Righteousness (6:1-8:39)
- VI. Restoration: Israel's Reception of God's Righteousness (9:1-11:36)
- VII. Application: The Behavior of God's Righteousness (12:1-15:13)
- VIII. Conclusion, Greetings, and Benediction (15:14-16:27)

Text (e.g., 3:10–18)

| Outline of Romans | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|--|---|--|---|------------|
| 1:1 | 1:18 | 3:21 | 6:1 | 9:1 | 12:1 | 15:14 |
| 1:17 | 3:20 | 5:21 | 8:39 | 11:36 | 15:13 | 16:27 |
| Intro & Theme | CONDEMNATION: The Need for God's Righteousness | JUSTIFICATION: The Provision of God's Righteousness | SANCTIFICATION: The Demonstration of God's Righteousness | RESTORATION: Israel's Future in God's Righteousness | APPLICATION: The Practice of God's Righteousness | Conclusion |

- A literary outline—like a map—reminds you where you are in your study and helps you interpret the text correctly, according to the author's flow of thought.
- Sometimes, confusion over what you are reading occurs because you have lost your bearings. Step back and look at it in the bigger picture.

7. Interpret according to paragraphs.

PRINCIPLE: The faithful study of Scripture focuses on the study of full paragraphs rather than isolated phrases or even sentences.

- A paragraph is “a subdivision of a written composition that consists of one or more sentences, deals with one point or gives the words of one speaker, and begins on a new usually indented line” (Merriam-Webster).
- A paragraph contains a complete unit of thought. Its contents are interrelated and must be studied together. It can be as small as one sentence, or contain many.



KEEP
CALM
AND
FOCUS ON
PARAGRAPHS

2 For I want you to know ^a how great a ^w struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ² that ^x their hearts may be encouraged, being ^a knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of ^b God's mystery, which is Christ, ³ ^c in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I say this in order ^d that no one may delude you with plausible arguments. ⁵ For ^e though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing to see your ^f good order and ^g the firmness of your faith in Christ.

Alive in Christ

⁶ ^a Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, ⁷ ^f rooted and ^f built up in him and ^k established in the faith, just ^l as you were taught, abounding ^m in thanksgiving.

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive by ⁿ philosophy and ^o empty deceit, according to ^p human tradition, according to the ^q elemental spirits ^r of the world, and not according to Christ. ⁹ For ^r in him the whole fullness of deity dwells ^s bodily, ¹⁰ and ^t you have been filled in him, who is ^u the head of all rule and authority. ¹¹ In him also ^v you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by ^w putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² ^x having been buried with him in baptism, in which ^y you were also raised with him through faith in ^z the powerful working of God, ^{aa} who raised him from the dead. ¹³ ^{aa} And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God ^{ab} made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, ¹⁴ by ^c canceling ^d the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. ¹⁵ ^{ac} This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. ¹⁶ ^{ad} He disarmed the rulers and authorities ^{ae} and ^c put them to open shame, by ^f triumphing over them in him. ³

Let No One Disqualify You

¹⁶ Therefore let no one ^{ag} pass judgment on you ^{ah} in questions of food and drink, or with regard to ^{ai} a festival or ^{aj} a new moon or a Sabbath. ¹⁷ ^{ak} These are a shadow of the things to come, but ^{al} the substance belongs to Christ. ¹⁸ Let no one ^{am} disqualify you, ^{an} insisting on asceticism and worship of angels, ^{ao} going on in detail about visions, ^{ap} ^p puffed up without reason by ^{aq} his sensuous mind, ¹⁹ and ^r not ^{as} holding fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God.

²⁰ If with Christ ^{at} you died to the ^{au} elemental spirits of the world, ^{av} why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations— ²¹ ^{aw} "Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch" ²² (^{ax} referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to ^{ay} human precepts and teachings? ²³ These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in ^{az} promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are ^{ba} of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

PREACHING OF JOHN THE BAPTIST

1 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

² As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

"BEHOLD, I SEND MY MESSENGER
AHEAD OF YOU,
WHO WILL PREPARE YOUR WAY;
³ THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE
WILDERNESS,
"MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD,
MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT."

⁴ John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness ^a preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

⁵ And all the country of Judea was going out to him, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins.

⁶ John was clothed with camel's hair and wore a leather belt around his waist, and his diet was locusts and wild honey.

⁷ And he was preaching, and saying, "After me One is coming who is mightier than I, and I am not fit to stoop down and untie the thong of His sandals.

⁸ "I baptized you ^b with water; but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

¹⁰ Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him;

¹¹ and a voice came out of the heavens: "You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased."

12 Immediately the Spirit ^c impelled Him to go out into the wilderness.

¹³ And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him.

JESUS PREACHES IN GALILEE

14 Now after John had been taken into

custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God,

¹⁵ and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

16 As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen.

¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

¹⁹ Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets.

²⁰ Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

21 They ^d went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach.

²² They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as ^e one having authority, and not as the scribes.

²³ Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,

²⁴ saying, "What business do we have with each other, Jesus ^f of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

²⁵ And Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"

²⁶ Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him.

²⁷ They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

²⁸ Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee.

^aOr proclaiming ^bThe Gr here can be translated in, with or by ^cLit the Nazarene

The first Epistle generall of Peter.

THE ARGUMENT.

HE exhorth the faythfull to denie themselves and to contemne the world, that being deliuered from all carnall affections and impietiments, they may more speedily attayne to the heavenly kingdom of Christ, whereunto we are called by the grace of God reuealed to vs in his Sonne, and haue already receiued it by faith, iustified by hope, and are therein confirmed by holines of life. And to the intent his fayth should not faile, seeing Christ contemned and reiected almost of the whole world, he deliuereth that this is nothing else but the accomplishing of the Scriptures which testify that he should be the burning flame, to the reprobate and the firme foundation of saluation to the faythfull: therefore he exhorth them courageously to go forward, considering what they were, and to what degree God hath called them. After he entereth particular points, teaching sundrie how to obey these gouernours, and seruants their masters, & how married folkes ought to behaue them selves. And because it is appointed for all that are godly, to suffer persequions, he sheweth them what good yllue these afflictions shall haue, and contrariwise what punishment God reserveth for the wicked. Last of all he teacheth how the ministers ought to behaue themselves, for bidding them to vspire authoritie oer the Churches, that young men ought to be modest, and apt to learne, and to endeth with an exhortation.

CHAP. I.

As touching that through the abundant mercie of God we are elect with respect to a long hope. It is not because we were truly so. Chose the saluation in Christ in our nature, but a thing prophecied of after. It is reprobeth them to a godly conuersation, as alway as they are now borne into by the power of God.

Peter an Apostle of Iesus Christe, to the strangers & dwell here and there throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father unto sanctification of the spirit, through obedience a sprinkling of blood of Iesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied vnto you.

Blessed be God euen the Father of our Lord Iesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercie hath begotten vs againe vnto a liuely hope by the resurrection of Iesus Christ from the dead.

To an inheritance immortall and vndefiled, and that fadeeth not away, reserved in heauen for you,

Which are kept by the power of God through fayth vnto saluation, which is prepared to be shewed in the last time:

Wherein ye reioyce, though now for a season (if neede require) pee are in heauens, through manifold tentations,

That the trial of your fayth, being much more precious then golde that perisheth (though it bee tried with fire) might bee founde vnto your prayse, and honour and glorie, at the appearing of Iesus Christ:

Whome ye haue not seene, and yet loue him, in whome now, though ye see him not, yet do you beleue, and reioyce with ioy vnspeakable and glorious,

Receiuing the end of your fayth, euen the saluation of your soules.

Of the which saluation the Prophets haue inquired and searched, which prophesied of the grace that should come vnto you,

Searching what of what time the Spirit which testified before of Christ which was in them, should declare the sufferings that should come vnto Christ, and the glorie that should follow.

Vnto whom it was reueiled, & not vnto themselves, but vnto vs they should minister things which are now shewed vnto you

by the which I haue preached vnto you the Gospel by the holy Ghost set down fro heauen, the which things the Angels desire to behold.

Wherefore, & guide by the loves of your minde: be sober, and trust perfectly on the grace that is brought vnto you, by the reuelation of Iesus Christ,

As obedient children, not fashioning your selues vnto the former lustes of your ignorance:

But as he which hath called you, is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conuersation,

Because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy.

And if ye call him Father, which without respect of personudgeth according to carnal mans worke, passe the time of your dwelling here in feare.

Knowing that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as siluer and golde, from your vaine conuersation, receiued by the traditions of the fathers,

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lambe vndefiled, and without spot,

Which was offered before the foundation of the worlde, but was declared in the last times for your sakes,

Which by his meane do beleue in God that rayled him from the dead, and gaue him glorie, that your fayth and hope might be in God.

Seeing your soules are purified in obeying the truth through the spirit, to loue brotherly without feyning, loue one another with a pure heart feruently,

Being borne anew, not of mortall seede, but of immortall, by the word of God, who liueth and endureth for euer.

For all flesh is as grasse, and all the glory of man is as the flower of grasse. The grasse withereth, and the flower falleth away.

But the worde of the Lord endureth for euer: & this is the worde which is preached among you.

Therefore, laying aside all malice, and enuie, and all euil speaking,

and enuie, and all euil speaking,

a Which were chosen to whom he was appointed to be an Apostle,

b The free election of God to the efficient cause of our saluation, the materiall cause is our obedience, our effectuall calling is the first and last cause is our sanctification.

c As last, of Christ, & Con. 1. eph. 1. 11.

d For it is but dead a while, but shall be raised againe.

e Therefore they might be loue for no matter howe borne of the flesh.

f In the day of judgement.

g With such faith to require when it pleaseth God to be in such things.

h Upon his, for he receiued from each thing.

i At the same time.

j Wherein they were more perfect, than to them: for he is the things which they should minister.

Ad. 1. 1. Luke 7. 11. 1. Thim. 3. 16. 1. Pet. 1. 12.

k Whom you were in light since a house not of gold.

l Luke 7. 11. 1. Thim. 3. 16. 1. Pet. 1. 12.

m Deut. 10. 17. 1. Cor. 13. 1. 1. Pet. 1. 12.

n According to carnal mans worke.

o Head Christ.

p Col. 1. 17. 1. Pet. 1. 12.

q Which was offered before the foundation of the worlde, but was declared in the last times for your sakes.

r Which by his meane do beleue in God that rayled him from the dead, and gaue him glorie, that your fayth and hope might be in God.

s From 1. Cor. 13. 1. 1. Pet. 1. 12.

t Therefore do not feare, for the Lord is with you.

u 1. Pet. 1. 12.

v Therefore do not feare, for the Lord is with you.

w 1. Pet. 1. 12.

HOW TO IDENTIFY PARAGRAPHS:

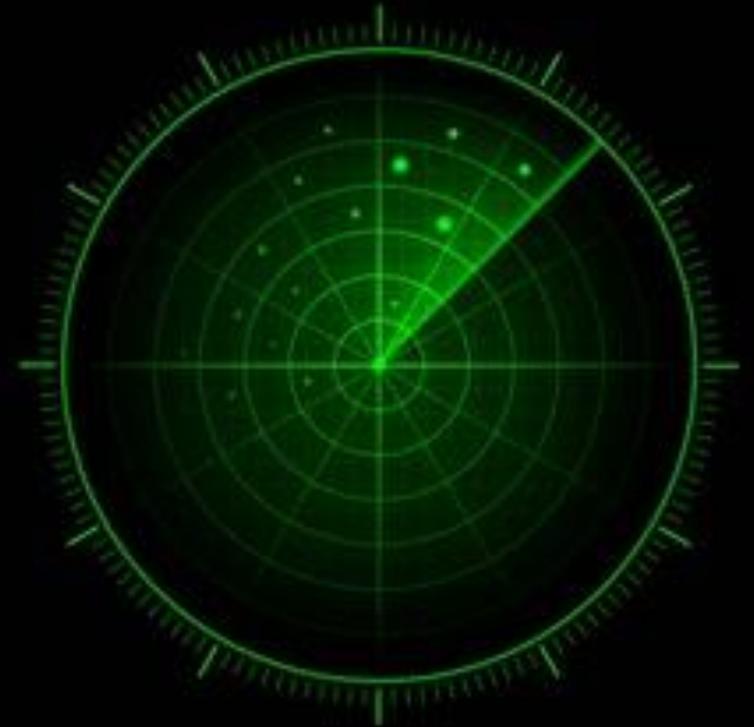
1. Look for a *unifying theme* that ties a group of sentences together (a repeated word, an emphasized concept, etc.).
2. Look for a *change of topic, setting, timing, or character*.
3. Look for a *transitional word or phrase* ("Therefore," "For this reason," "Now concerning," "It came about," etc.).
4. Look for *direct address* ("Beloved," "Brothers," etc.).

CHAP. II. He exhorth them to sin Kill all hate, & shewing that Christ is the foundation of our hope, & the resurrection of the dead. He sheweth them to abide in his love, & to be obedient to his commandments, & to be patient in tribulation, & to be diligent in prayer, & to be diligent in the study of the scriptures, & to be diligent in the study of the law of God.

Wherefore, laying aside all malice, and enuie, and all euil speaking, and enuie, and all euil speaking,

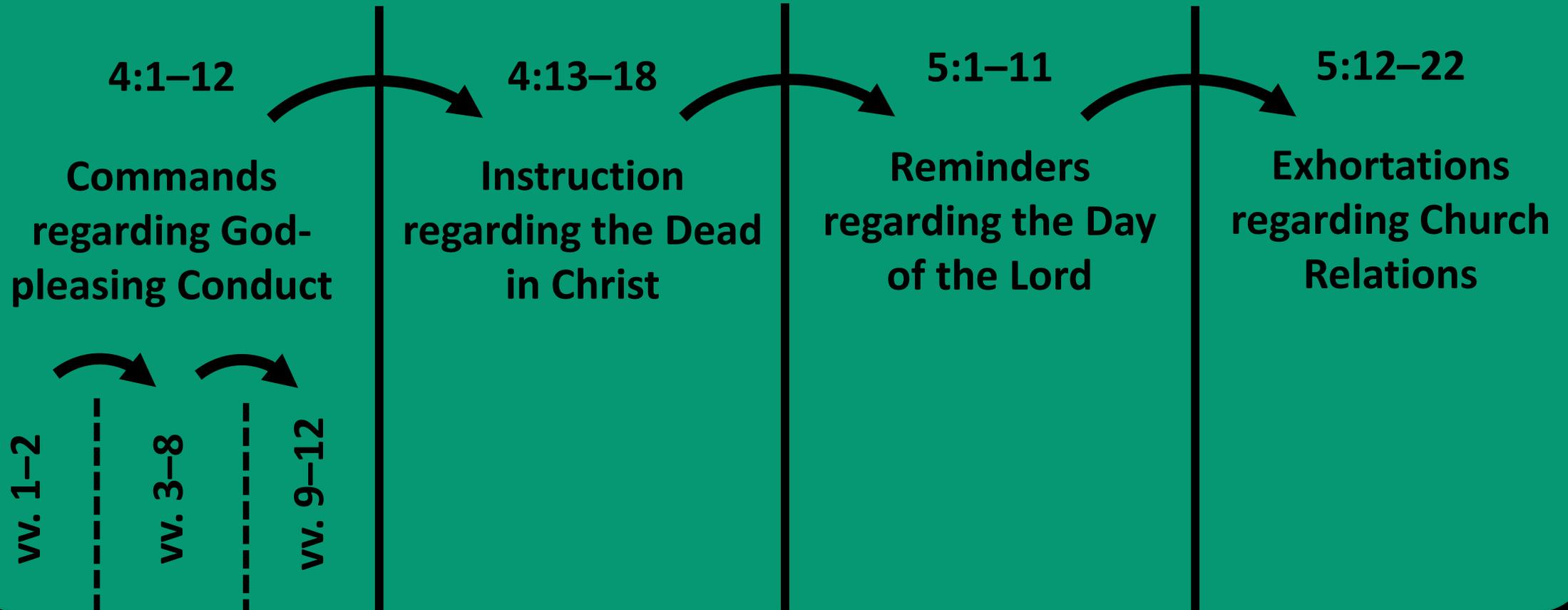
“The material before the passage is the radar which guides the approach, and the following material is the radar of the leaving. And if we can track the material approaching and leaving the particular passage, we have the framework in which the passage is to be understood.

—Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 139



OVERVIEW OF 1 THESSALONIANS

1 Thess 4:1–5:22 – Instructions for What Is Lacking (3:10)



5. Consider the book's background.
6. Identify the book's structure.
7. Study according to paragraphs.

Basic Bible Study, Pt 2

Steps 5–7

REVIEW

