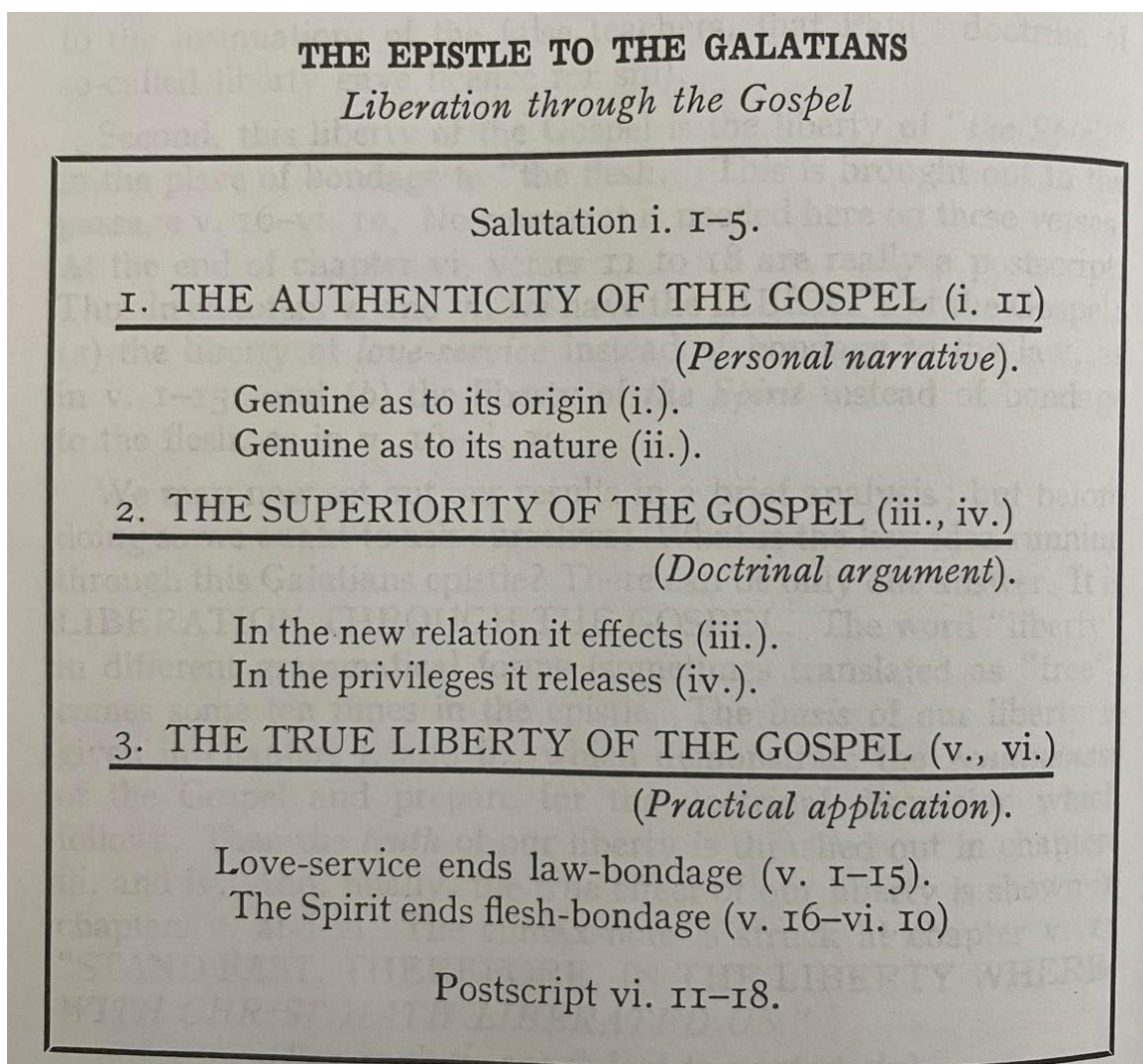


Sunday, July 17, 2022—Introduction To Galatians: Outline, Purpose, & Place In the Canon

Outline

- There are 6 Chapters, 149 Verses, and 3,098 Words in the book of Galatians in a King James Bible
- There are various ways one could choose to outline the book of Galatians. J. Sidlow Baxter author of *Explore the Book* does so as follows. (Baxter, 150)



- Many other outlines could be offered but for the sake of simplicity we will utilize the following basic format.
 - Chapters 1-2—Personal Section
 - Chapters 3-4—Doctrinal Section

- Chapters 5-6—Practical Section

Theme/Purpose

- According to Charles F. Baker in *Understanding Galatians and the Law*:
 - “The Galatian Epistle was written to combat legalism, one of the most insidious of all religious errors. Legalism is insidious because it appeals to man’s pride. It deceives man into believing he can justify himself before God by his own works of righteousness.” (Baker, 10)
- Legalism is any system of religion which teaches the possibility of earning salvation or attaining sanctification through the keeping of the law, whether God given or man-made.
- These concepts are commonly summarized in what is called “the Galatian error.” J. Sidlow Baxter elaborates on this concept in *Explore the Book*:
 - “[Commenting on Gal. 1:6-7] Paul would have the Galatians definitely to understand that they were being drawn away, not to a superior form of the same Gospel (as they gullibly supposed), but to something which was essentially different. And then, to make his meaning clear, he adds that the real bent of these troublers was to “pervert” the “Gospel of Christ.” The Greek verb here translated as “pervert” means, literally, to twist a thing round, or reverse it. In reality these troublers of the Galatians were not given them merely “another Gospel of the same kind,” with supposedly superior features; they were twisting the one and only “Gospel of Christ,” and reversing its meaning into something which it never meant at all.

Paul does not leave us in any doubt as to the nature of the Galatian defection. After his opening salutation, his very first word is: “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.” Speaking summarily, that was both the first and the final thing about the Galatian failure—they were erring from the absolutely distinctive doctrine of the one true Gospel, that the eternal salvation of the soul is altogether of Divine grace in Christ, apart from religious observance and human merit-works of every kind. Any what was it to which they were turning? Glance through the epistle. They were seeking to be “justified by the law” (Gal. 5:4). They were toying with the observance of “days and months and seasons and years” (Gal. 4:10). They were yielding to the idea that the rite of circumcision was necessary (Gal. 5:2, 6:12-13). They were seeking to supplement the work of the Holy Spirit by law-works of the flesh (Gal. 3:3). There were overlaying the simplicity and spirituality of the Gospel with Judaistic observances; and, indeed, it would seem that a fairly thorough conformity to the Law of Moses was becoming insisted on among them (Gal. 4:21). It was not that the Gospel was being directly denied; but their minds were becoming inoculated with legalistic and ritualized ideas with destroyed vital doctrines.” (Baxter, 142)

- Paul’s purpose is two-fold; he writes to defend his unique Apostleship as well as his unique Gospel.
- Paul writes this epistle to correct the doctrinal errors that the Galatians had entered into:
 - That one needs to observe the law in order to be justified. Faith alone is not enough to save.
 - That the justified believer is made perfect or sanctified through keeping the law.

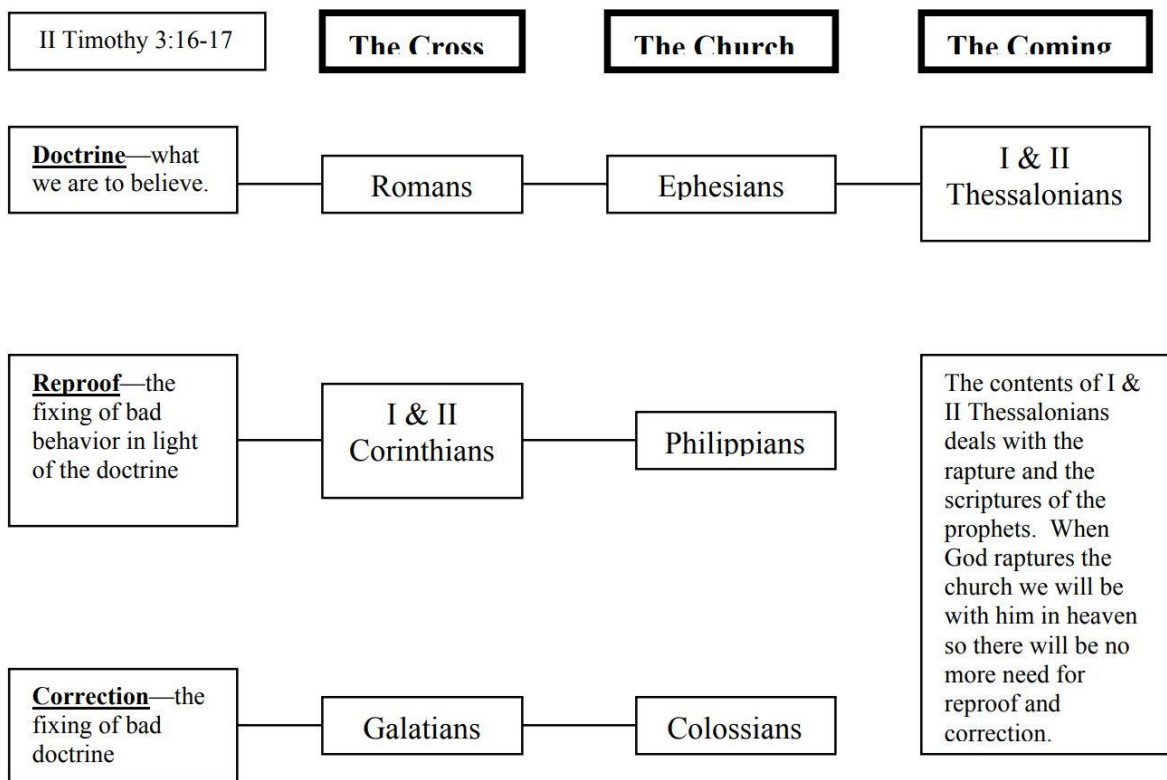
Canonical Order of the Pauline Epistles

- It is a well understood fact among Bible students that Paul’s epistles are not found in the New Testament cannon in the chronological order in which they were written.

Chronological Order	Canonical Order
Galatians	Romans—16 chapters
I Thessalonians	I Corinthians—16 chapters
II Thessalonians	II Corinthians—13 chapters
I Corinthians	Galatians—6 chapters
II Corinthians	Ephesians—6 chapters
Romans	Philippians—4 chapters
Philemon	Colossians—4 chapters
Colossians	I Thessalonians—5 chapters
Philippians	II Thessalonians—3 chapters
Ephesians	I Timothy—6 chapters
Titus	II Timothy—4 chapters
I Timothy	Titus—3 chapters
II Timothy	Philemon—1 chapter

- Most Evangelical Christians believe that Paul’s church epistles (letters addressed to churches not individuals i.e., Romans—II Thessalonians) are simply arranged in descending order from longest to shortest in terms of length and that there is no significance to their order.
- Meanwhile, some mid-Acts Pauline Dispensationalists view Paul’s epistles as comprising a rigid “curriculum” that must be studied in canonical order to get the proper “sense and sequence” of doctrine. On this view believers must pass through certain “check points” before advancing to more complex material.
 - This is the view of [Sonship Edification](#).
- In my view, both of these positions represent two extremes while the correct view resides in the middle.
- II Timothy 3:16-17—according to Paul all scripture of profitable for four things:

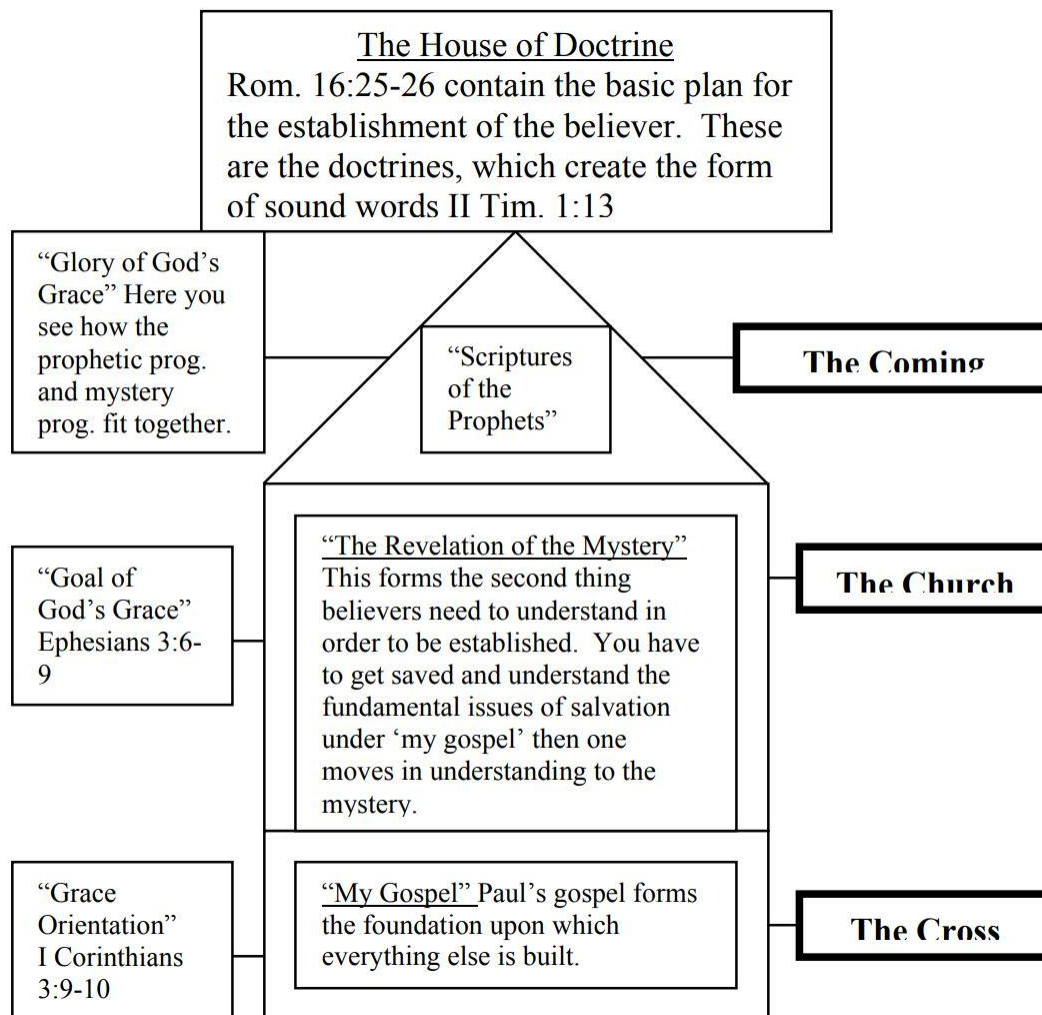
- Doctrine
 - Reproof
 - Correction
 - Instruction in Righteousness
- It is recognizing these four applications of scripture as well as the overall theme and purpose set forth in each one of Paul's church epistles that the significance of their canonical order comes into focus.
 - In 1960, Christian author J. Sidlow Baxter wrote a book titled *Explore the Book*. In this book Baxter carried forward some ideas first set forth by E.W. Bullinger in both *The Companion Bible* and *The Church Epistles* (1898) regarding the canonical order of Paul's letters addressed to the churches.
 - According to Baxter, these 9 books are divided into "a quartet, a trio, and a pair." "The first four cohere; so, do the middle three; so do the final two. In the first four the emphasis is on Christ and the Cross. In the middle three it is on Christ and the Church. In the final two it is on Christ and the Coming. In each case the order in which truth is presented corresponds with the order of the wording in II Timothy 3:16." (Baxter, 93)
 - Doctrine—Romans
 - Reproof—I & II Corinthians—Christ and the *Cross*
 - Correction—Galatians
 - Doctrine—Ephesians
 - Reproof—Philippians—Christ and the *Church*
 - Correction—Colossians
 - Doctrine—I & II Thessalonians—Christ and the *Coming*



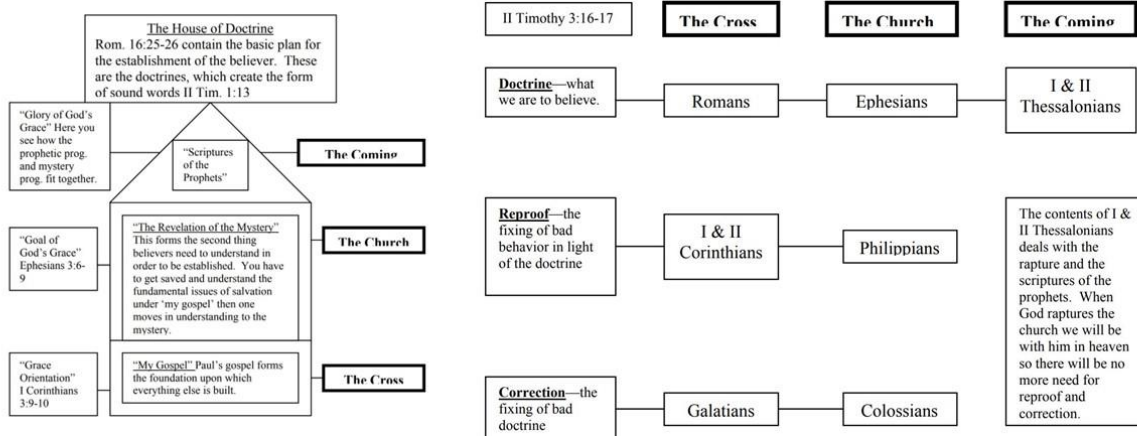
- Baxter is quick to point out that these distinctions are real but not absolute.
 - “This distinction, of course, is relative, not absolute, but it is really there. Accordingly, in the middle trio, while doctrine interpenetrates all three, in Ephesians it is presented normally and formally, whereas in Philippians and Colossian it reappears only *incidentally* to reproof or correction. This does not mean that Philippians and Colossians are necessarily less important to us than Ephesians. Nay, they all fill a vital place. We need to see truth only *statedly* but *relatedly*. It often becomes best defined when it is being *defended*. Especially do we need to see cardinal evangelical doctrine sharply silhouetted against its specious counterfeit; and *that is what we have in Colossians.*” (Baxter, 197)
- Regarding the canonical placement of Galatians Baxter states the following:
 - “As we have noted, the nine “Church” epistles (Romans to 2 Thessalonians) fall into a triform grouping. The Galatian epistle complete the first group (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians), which we have called the four evangelical epistles. In an earlier study we drew attention to 2 Timothy 3:16: [quotes the verse]; and we pointed out that the groups of epistles observed the order there indicated, i.e., doctrine. . . reproof . . . correction.” Thus, in the first group we have, distinctly, “doctrine” in Romans; “reproof” of wrong practice in Corinthians; “correction” of wrong doctrine in Galatians. We may well say, especially to young converts: Read Romans to be grounded in Christian

doctrine, read Corinthians to be guided in Christian practice; read Galatians to be guarded against deceptive error.” (Baxter, 139)

- Romans 16:25-26—Pastor Richard Joran in Grace School of Bible pointed out how the canonical order of Paul’s correlates with how believers are “stablished” in the faith, according to Paul in Rom. 16:25-26.



- In the next image one is able to see the House of Doctrine from Romans 16:25-26 next to the canonical outline of Paul’s church epistles from II Timothy 3:16-17.



- While I have no problems with these concepts in general, we must caution against their extreme use/application as exhibited in the theological system of developed by Keith R. Blades known as Sonship Edification.

Works Cited

Baker, Charles F. *Understanding Galatians and the Law*. Grand Rapids, MI: Grace Publications, 1993.

Baxter, J. Sidlow. *Explore the Book*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1960.