

THE
LIFE AND
THEOLOGY
OF PAUL

GUY PRENTISS WATERS

“Dr. Waters has written an accessible, sound, and pastoral introduction to the life and theology of the Apostle to the Gentiles. Careful exegesis and theological discernment yield concise but rich expositions of Paul’s teaching on sin, salvation, the church, redemptive history, and the future. Each thematic treatment closes with consideration of its relevance to the church’s life today, building bridges from Paul’s proclamation of Christ and His redemptive achievement into the issues that Christians today confront. This brief study is an excellent way to get acquainted with the persecutor-turned-propagator of Christ’s gospel, whom God’s Spirit inspired to write more New Testament books than anyone else.”

—DR. DENNIS E. JOHNSON

Professor emeritus of practical theology
Westminster Seminary California, Escondido, Calif.

“*The Life and Theology of Paul* is a very useful introductory treatment of the major contours of Paul’s theology. While conversant with contemporary scholarship, the author does an excellent job focusing on what is most essential and in distilling complex interpretive issues. Warmly recommended!”

—DR. ANDREAS J. KÖSTENBERGER

Founder of Biblical Foundations
Theologian in residence
Fellowship Raleigh, Raleigh, N.C.

“If you are looking for a concise, clear, and faithful summary of Paul’s theology, Guy Waters’ work is the perfect fit. Waters faithfully expounds some of the main themes in Paul’s thought and also includes practical lessons for believers and churches today. A very helpful resource for students, pastors, and those who are looking for a brief textbook on Paul’s theology.”

—DR. THOMAS R. SCHREINER

James Harrison Buchanan Professor New Testament Interpretation
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

**THE LIFE
AND THEOLOGY
OF PAUL**

**THE LIFE
AND THEOLOGY
OF PAUL**

GUY PRENTISS WATERS



LIGONIER MINISTRIES

The Life and Theology of Paul

© 2017 by Guy Prentiss Waters

Published by Ligonier Ministries
421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771
Ligonier.org

Printed in York, Pennsylvania
Maple Press
0001224
First edition, third printing

ISBN 978-1-56769-865-7 (Hardcover)
ISBN 978-1-56769-880-0 (ePub)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise—without the prior written permission of the publisher, Ligonier Ministries. The only exception is brief quotations in published reviews.

Interior design and typeset: Katherine Lloyd, The DESK

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Control Number: 2017029688

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction to Paul	1
2.	The Conversion and Call of Paul	11
3.	Paul's Gospel and the Two Ages	21
4.	Paul's Gospel—Sin (I)	31
5.	Paul's Gospel—Sin (II).	41
6.	Paul's Gospel—Justification (I).	49
7.	Paul's Gospel—Justification (II)	61
8.	Paul's Gospel—Sanctification (I)	71
9.	Paul's Gospel—Sanctification (II).	81
10.	Paul's Gospel—Sanctification (III)	91
11.	Paul and the Church	101
12.	Paul and the Future	113
	<i>Acknowledgments.</i>	125
	<i>Selected Bibliography</i>	127
	<i>Scripture Index.</i>	129
	<i>About the Author</i>	135

INTRODUCTION TO PAUL

It is hard to overstate the influence of the Apostle Paul. One measure of his influence can be seen in that his letters were instrumental in the conversion of three men who would become some of the most important theologians and leaders of the Christian church.¹ In the year 386, Augustine (354–430) found himself weeping beneath a fig tree.² He was overwhelmed by a sense of the guilt and power of his sin. At that moment, he heard a child singing a song—“*tolle lege, tolle lege*” (take and read; take and read). Augustine arose and picked up a book containing the Apostle Paul’s letters. He read the first words that met his eyes: “Not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires” (Rom. 13:13b–14). The effect of these words on Augustine was immediate and powerful. He comments, “For instantly even with the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of confidence now darted into my heart, all the darkness of doubting vanished away.”³ Augustine had been converted.

1 Much of the biographical material that follows has been drawn from my “Romans” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*, ed. Michael J. Kruger (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2016), 169–70.

2 Augustine relates the details of his conversion at *Confessions* 8.12, from which the following account is drawn.

3 *Confessions* 8.12, LCL translation.

THE LIFE AND THEOLOGY OF PAUL

More than a thousand years later, a German monk named Martin Luther (1483–1546) struggled to find peace of conscience. Luther’s years of prayer, fasting, confession, and a pilgrimage to Rome had failed to give him spiritual rest. In 1519, while studying in the Tower of the Black Cloister, Luther came across these words from Paul: “For in [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith’” (Rom. 1:17). Luther realized that the righteousness he needed as a sinner was not something that he could merit by his own efforts. This righteousness was the gift of God in the gospel—received through faith, not earned by his works. Once this gospel insight penetrated Luther’s soul, he was a changed man: “Here I felt that I was altogether born again and had entered paradise itself through open gates.”⁴ Neither Martin Luther nor the Western church would be the same again.

In the early eighteenth century, a young Anglican priest pursued the rigors of a strict devotional life and even hazarded a perilous missionary trip to the New World. Despite all of these labors, this priest, John Wesley (1703–91), knew that he was unconverted. It was in 1738, on Aldersgate Street in London, that Wesley underwent a life-changing experience. He attended a gathering where the preface to Martin Luther’s commentary on Romans was being read. Wesley commented on what happened to him as he listened: “I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”⁵ The message of Paul’s epistle to the Romans, as summarized in Luther’s preface, worked in power on Wesley’s soul.

Paul’s Influence

The influence of Paul’s letters extends well beyond these three towering figures of church history. The entire Christian church is indebted to Paul for much of what we know about the gospel. Without Paul’s letters, we would know far less about such precious biblical truths as election, calling,

4 Cited in Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell, eds., *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2012), 497.

5 *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M. (enlarged from original mss. with notes from unpublished diaries, annotations, maps, and illustrations)*, ed. Nehemiah Curnock (London: Culley, 1909), 1:475–76.

INTRODUCTION TO PAUL

justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification. Where would the church be without the Apostle Paul?

One cannot think of Paul without a sense of admiration and wonder at the ways in which the Lord Jesus Christ has used him in the lives of God's people. He is one of the greatest minds ever to have graced the Christian church. He is responsible for penning, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, thirteen of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament. He was a fearless preacher, bringing the gospel of Christ to "the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). He has left, in the pages of the New Testament, an example that every Christian must follow (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1).

But this is not the way that the very earliest Christians would have regarded Paul. If you were a Christian believer in Jerusalem a few years after the resurrection of Christ, you probably would have regarded Paul with suspicion and dread. When Paul stepped into the church in Jerusalem and announced that he had become a believer, the "disciples . . . were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26).

Why was Paul so feared by the Christian church in those early days? Paul was feared because he had been a ferocious persecutor of the church. Reflecting on his life in Judaism, Paul told the Galatians that he had "once tried to destroy" the faith (Gal. 1:23), and that he had "persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it" (Gal. 1:13). Paul wanted to exterminate the faith—and all those who embraced that faith.

Luke's account in Acts confirms Paul's testimony. Had Jesus not stopped Paul in his tracks on the road to Damascus, Paul would have followed through on his intent to bring "any belonging to the Way . . . bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:2). Paul was not content with seeing Christians arrested. He wanted them dead. "I persecuted this Way to the death" (Acts 22:4); "but when [the disciples] were put to death I cast my vote against them" (Acts 26:10). Not even women were exempt from Paul's persecution (Acts 22:4). Because of Paul, husbands and wives were forcibly separated and children were left without their mothers and fathers.

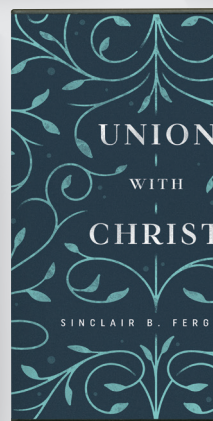
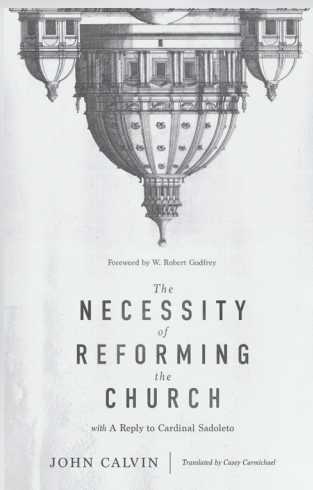
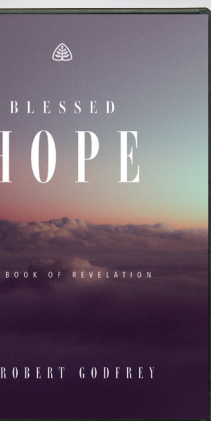
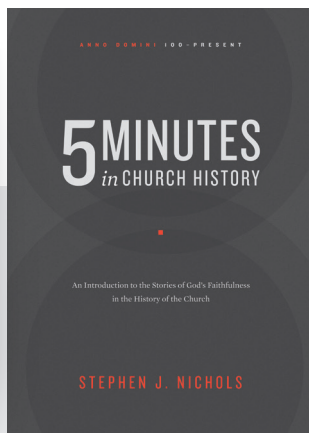
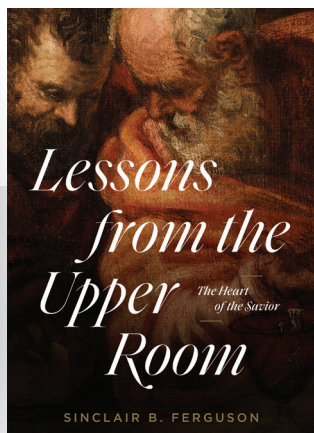
Paul never forgot this dark chapter of his life. In one of his last letters, writing to a beloved younger colleague in the ministry, Paul reflected on his past:

Formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent.
But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Guy Prentiss Waters is the James M. Baird Jr. Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss. Before coming to RTS in 2007, he served as assistant professor of biblical studies at Belhaven University in Jackson. Dr. Waters is a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania (B.A.), Westminster Theological Seminary (M.Div.), and Duke University (Ph.D.). He is a teaching elder in the Presbytery of the Mississippi Valley (PCA). He is author or editor of several books, including *How Jesus Runs the Church*, *Justification and the New Perspectives on Paul*, and *The Federal Vision and Covenant Theology*, and has written dozens of chapters, articles, and reviews. He and his family reside in Madison, Miss.

We want to see men and women around the world connect the deep truths of the Christian faith to everyday life.



Order your copy of this title, download the digital version, or browse thousands of resources at Ligonier.org.



LIGONIER MINISTRIES