PAUL'S THEOLOGY
Lesson 17
Scripture – Part One

One of the required courses where I went to law school was called "Research and Writing." We were taught how to find legal authorities and then properly insert those authorities into the legal papers we were drafting. The school knew that most every lawyer is involved in writing legal memoranda as well as briefing filed before judges.

A common necessity for virtually all legal writing is properly finding and citing legal authority. For example, if I was writing a brief to argue that the U.S. Constitution permits a time of silent prayer and meditation in public schools, then I would not have any hope of success if I simply set forward the policy reasons such prayers should be allowed. Instead, I must find the legal precedent or authority that conforms to my argument. That precedence and authority must be properly quoted and referenced. The authority must not be taken out of context, unless such a limitation is noted. The authority must also be current. (It would be error to cite an authority that had been overturned and was no longer legally valid.)

One of the tools we were taught that was ALWAYS to be done in any written effort was called "cite checking." That meant every quote, every reference, every legal authority was to be rechecked to make sure the quotes are correct to the letter and comma, every authority citation was in proper "form" with appropriate date, page, and line references. Nothing could be out of date or context. Only then was a writing suitable for printing.

The class, as indeed the entire legal education process, left its imprint on the way my brain works. I always maintain a healthy cynicism when I read anything without references or footnotes. The presence of references never satisfies me either, I want to dig out the original source and see whether or not it was properly represented. If I read a quotation, then I want to track down its origin and see if there is any error in transmission. I actually enjoy the process and chuckle when I find errors. Yes, I am a nerd.

This is a writing approach somewhat peculiar to law (and some other aspects of academia). It certainly is not the only means of scholarship. It is not a fair way to judge the writings of others outside of such a legal situation. Much like our rules of grammar, society and time alter the way people write and make reference to authorities. We see this clearly this week as we examine the writings of Paul and his letters. Over and over, Paul references Scripture as his authority, but he does so in a much different way than a 21st century lawyer.

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Our goal today is to understand the scope of Paul's usage of Scripture, while trying to understand Paul's views of Scripture.

TODAY'S ISSUES

Paul quotes a number of authorities in his writings. The main source he references repeatedly is what we call the Old Testament. Our first goal this class is to filter through his writings and get an overview of where and how he used the Old Testament. We then will consider what we can learn about Paul's views of Scripture. Finally, before our points for home, we will give a preview of some problem areas and issues that merit further consideration in another class.

OVERVIEW – PAUL AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Do you have a Bible? The odds are you're answering, "Yes." In fact, most of us have a number of Bibles – different sizes, different versions, different languages, perhaps. Some people have a "favorite" version. Others pick their Bible based on the "notes" that accompany the Bible. Since I travel quite a bit, I have several Bibles that are road worthy! That generally means they can withstand the rough and tumble of my bag, are small enough not to add too much weight, and hopefully have a concordance for when I am suffering a mind blank on where some Scripture is found.

I especially need a good travel Bible because of these lessons I get to prepare each week. The Bible and the lessons are my constant and trustworthy companions each week, regardless of where I am. Without a travel Bible, I would not be able to write these lessons on the road.

This brings me to the subject of Paul. Think about it; he wrote and wrote and wrote. His letters make up thirteen of the twenty-seven books in our New Testament – almost half! These letters of Paul are chock-full of Scripture. Over and over, Paul alludes to, references, and quotes Old Testament passages in his writings.

We should pause here and consider how Paul would have done this. Almost certainly Paul did not carry with him the whole "Old Testament." As we have discussed previously, Paul lived before the advent of books, so the Old Testament was actually a collection of expensive and bulky scrolls. Not an easy travelling companion! Paul might have had access to full Old Testament scrolls while at various synagogues around the Mediterranean while he travelled, but even that is not always a given in light of his frequent expulsion from synagogues and the concurrent Jewish persecution.

Late in his life, Paul asks Timothy, "When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books ["scrolls"], and above all the parchments" (2

Tim. 4:13), so we can assume that Paul had, at least at some point, some portion of the Scriptures. It is difficult to see what other books would have been of similar importance to Paul. We are again reminded that Paul saw in the Old Testament writings that were from God and were useful "for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16).

Assuming then that Paul had, at least at some times, part of the Old Testament Scriptures, we come to another advantage we would have over Paul. Our pages turn easy, many of our Bibles have concordances, and some of us have electronic Bibles that search and find what we need with lightening speed. Paul, on the other hand, had scrolls and papers that were hard to maneuver through. The books did not have chapter divisions as ours do, nor did they have verse separations. In fact, the words themselves ran one to another without spacing between each word!

Thinking through these factors makes it easy to understand that the writing conventions at the time of Paul were not quite what they are today! It is also amazing to think about how often Paul would quote Scripture!

Professor Earle Ellis made an analysis of Paul's writings determining that Paul quoted the Old Testament ninety-three times.[1] That means a full one-third of all New Testament quotations of the Old Testament are found in Paul's writings. In addition to these quotations, there are numerous times where Paul alludes to, or writes in language clearly influenced by one Old Testament passage or another. As Ellis concluded,

> The writings of Paul reveal a person immersed in the content and teachings of the OT [Old Testament].[2]

While we do not know which scrolls Paul may have owned and kept with him, we can surmise which ones involved much of his study time by seeing what he referenced and quoted. Paul quotes from sixteen different Old Testament books, but by far, most of his quotations are from the Pentateuch[3] (33), Isaiah (25), and the Psalms (19).[4] By and large, most of these quotations come, naturally, in Paul's longer letters of 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans.

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[1] Ellis, Earle. Paul's Use of the Old Testament (London: Oliver and Boyd 1957) at 11.

[2] *Ibid*. at 10.

[3] Genesis – Deuteronomy, the "five books of Moses" from which the name "Penta [meaning "five"] teuch." The Jews, Paul included, termed these five books the "Torah" or "Law."

[4] Our reference for this comes from the chart prepared by Ellis and attached at the end of this lesson.

We should note here the obvious, Paul spent a great deal of time in the Old Testament, reading and *memorizing* Scriptures. While we have isolated and set out the times Paul has quoted the Old Testament, we have not added in the many times he alludes to or captures themes and teaching points from it.

PAUL'S VIEW ON THE OLD TESTAMENT

If you have followed this class, you have seen many times in our study of Paul, we have used 2 Timothy 3:16-17 as a point for home where Paul wrote,

> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, **t**hat the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

Certainly, this Scripture gives a good overview of Paul's attitude and perspective on the Old Testament. Paul understood that the Scriptures did not originate with Moses, David, or any man. The Scriptures came from the essence and Spirit of God. They were breathed or "Spirited" out by God. Even beyond pointing to Scripture's origins, this passage also affirms the God-quality of Scripture. Just as God breathed life into Adam, God's breathing of Scripture puts life and vitality into the words. They are no longer a collection of letters; they are the living expressions of the Creator.

This point is well and good, but might we not understand a bit more if we looked closely at some of the passages where Paul quoted the Scriptures? We could start by seeing in Romans 3:1-2 where Paul speaks of the advantages the Jews had over the Gentiles. Paul explains that the Jews "were entrusted with the oracles of God." Paul is referencing the Scriptures he has already called "holy" in Romans 1:2 where he explained that the gospel was "promised beforehand through his [God's] prophets in the holy Scriptures."

Paul saw the Scriptures as God's arm of hope and instruction. In Romans 15:4 Paul wrote:

> For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Hence, we see Paul constantly resorting to the Old Testament to prove his arguments, to give sense to his directives and teachings, and to explain his teachings. In Romans 2, where Paul wants to supply proof for his assertion that "all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin" Paul goes to the Psalms, quoting a montage of Psalms from Psalm 14:1-3, 5:9, 10:7 before going to Isaiah 59:7-8 and returning to finish with Psalm 36:1!

In Romans 4 where Paul wants to explain the justification we have by faith in

God, Paul uses Abraham as his teaching tool and proof text. Paul asks,

> For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness." (Rom 4:3).

Paul is quoting here from Genesis 15:6. Paul continues to make his point from Abraham, but goes further by citing David's writings for the proposition that God counts righteousness apart from works:

> Just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin (Rom. 4:6-8).

Paul then continues using Abraham as his example, quoting even further from the Old Testament:

> That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist (Rom. 4:16-17).

Having then made his point, over and over by referencing and quoting the Old Testament, Paul easily resumes his teaching point applying it to the Romans:

> Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1).

These examples from Romans also provide a glimpse into the way Paul cites the Old Testament. Of course, he does not give chapter and verse, for they were not yet added to the texts. Paul calls the Old Testament the "oracles of God," "Scriptures," the words of David, or even something that "was written." If we were to examine all of Paul's citations, then we would see even more. Paul will call Scripture the "law" (Rom 7:7; 1 Cor. 14:21)[5], along with a few other words, but generally he calls it simply "Scripture."

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[5] Likely, many of these times Paul is referring to the Torah, those first five books that constituted the Jewish Law. Hence some translators like the English Standard Version, will put a capital L on "Law" where the translators believe Paul means the Torah books.

We get further insight into Paul's view of the Scriptures by noting the way he begins his quotations. While almost one-third of the time Paul will simply say, "it is written," he also writes, "God said."

Consider passages like 2 Cor. 6:16 where Paul is explaining that a believer should not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. Paul quotes Leviticus 26:12, emphasizing it was God speaking:

> What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.[6]

Now as we consider Paul's views on the Old Testament we might also ask whether Paul considered the Old Testament injunctions and instructions on rituals and worship binding? In other words, would Paul use the Old Testament to enforce Sabbath rest and worship? How about the rules on sacrifices and social interaction?

I think the fair answer to this is "No" and "Yes." Paul certainly found the morality of the Old Testament important for the believer to use and learn from. Without question this morality was never the basis for someone's righteousness before God, but that did not obviate the ethical and moral instructions. For example, in Romans 12, Paul writes a number of ethical admonitions to the readers. All of the morality he taught was consistent with the morals set forth in the Old Testament. Then, when adding that the Romans believers should, "never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God," Paul uses the Old Testament in support and explanation of his point. Paul wrote:

> For it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

Paul is here quoting from Deuteronomy 32:35. He then combines another section of Scripture from Proverbs 25:21-22 adding:

> To the contrary, "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals on his head" (Rom. 12:20).

While we can readily see Paul's emphasis on the Old Testament for teaching and

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[6] See similarly Rom. 9:15; 2 Cor.6:2; and Rom 11:4.

understanding right and wrong, we should also note just two chapters later, Paul draws a line with the application of certain dietary laws as well as the religious celebrations of certain days as more holy than others. Paul urges the readers not to clash over the different opinions on these issues. He also mandates that the issues not become so important to some that the consciences of others are steamrolled. (See Rom. 14).

Paul was always emphatic that Gentiles need not become Jews in order to be Christians. We see this most clearly on the issue of circumcision. In his Galatian letter, Paul uses circumcision as an example of where people are using ritual in place of faith as establishing their merit before God. For Paul, religious ritual was never binding from the Old Testament as a moral necessity before God. (See Gal. 51-6).

Before we leave Paul's views of the Old Testament, we should consider one last question: What version did Paul use? Of course, it was not the English Standard Version we are using in this series. Nor was it the New International Version many use in churches today. It was not even the venerable King James Version!

We should preface this discussion by setting out the versions Paul had at his disposal! We know that Paul had the Hebrew Old Testament, but there were no doubt a number of manuscripts "alive" at the time and with those manuscripts came slight variations in passages as errors crept in over centuries of even the most careful copying. We do not know for certain which Hebrew texts Paul typically used because we do not have many available today that were in use at Paul's time.

The oldest Hebrew manuscripts still available for modern scholars came from almost 1,000 A.D.[7] This fact changed in the period 1947 to 1956 with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls. These findings from eleven caves in the Dead Sea region contained a number of different books of our Old Testament (whole and partial). The vast majority of the scrolls were copied by 68 A.D.,[8] making even the latest ones contemporary with Paul. One can now buy a Bible that sets out the different readings found in the Dead Sea Scroll texts for study and analysis.[9]

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[7] The text used for most every translation is called the Leningrad Codex and was copied in 1008 AD. A second useful codex (but one where history has lost many of the pages) is called the Aleppo Codex which dates from 925 AD.

[8] Abegg, Martin, et al., The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible (San Francisco: Harper 1999) at viii.

[9] See the Abegg book mentioned in the previous footnote.

Scholars have done a marvelous job at working to determine the best text for use in translations of the Bible. Through processes of comparison, contrast, archaeology and theology, scholars have very few areas of question, and those are not on passages of great important to core theology![10] Still it a recognition that each word is important that keeps scholars working hard to determine what the original written book would have said. (Scholars call the "original" the "autograph". The goal is for scholars to compare different manuscripts to determine what the "autograph" would have said.

We need to remember that Paul was not limited in his version choice to some Hebrew text or another. Paul also had available to him the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic Old Testament.

There is a legend behind the Septuagint that gives it its name. The legend is certainly not true (that 70[11] or 72 Jewish scholars produced the translation).[12] Still, we know that by Paul's time there were a number of versions of the Greek translation in use by Jews and Christians throughout the Greek-speaking world.

Scholars today debate how and the exact extent to which Paul relied on the Septuagint, but they do agree that Paul used the Septuagint to a much greater degree than he did the Hebrew text. This is not surprising since Paul was writing in Greek to people who used Greek as a primary language. In the Mediterranean world outside Judea, very few Jews would have still spoken or been able to easily follow Hebrew. Most scholars see that as the reason for the Septuagint in the first place (or at least its rapid spread throughout the dispersed Jews).

In places where Paul did choose to use the Hebrew text, Paul himself was translating the Hebrew into Greek for his readers to understand. Again this reinforces reasons for Paul's natural usage of the Septuagint.

We will leave a good bit of the Septuagint discussion for next week as it rises in the consideration of problem areas that merit further discussion.

PROBLEM AREAS AND ISSUES FOR FURTHER STUDY

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[10] See, for example, Emanuel Tov's work, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1992).

[11] "Septuagint" is from the Greek for "seventy."

[12] See the thorough discussion by Martin Hengle, *The Septuagint as Christian Scripture* (Baker Academic 2002).

There is a great deal of discovery fun (think Indiana Jones meets intensive Bible study and investigation) ahead as we consider some wonderful problem areas and the great options of answers. These problem areas include:

- Why do Paul's quotes from the Old Testament often read different from our Old Testament passages? Did he have a bad memory? Are our versions wrong? Or are there logical and faithful explanations? (Spoiler alert: There are logical and faithful explanations!)
- Why are there places where Paul seems to be quoting the Old Testament, but we cannot find the passage he is quoting?
- Why does Paul's interpretation of some Old Testament Scriptures seem at odds with the way we might interpret it today?

So, come back next week as we continue our study of Paul's Views on and usage of Scripture!

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"God said..."* (2 Cor. 6:16; 4:6).

   Paul, of all people, knew of the translation issues of the Septuagint. Paul knew of transmission errors that occur over time as copying of God's holy word took place. But Paul had no concern that any such minor typos (albeit handwritten ones!) invalidated the word of God. God had endured that his word was real. The God breathed Scriptures were God's very oracles. Paul used them over and over not only to teach, but also to shape his own life. May we do the same!

2. *"Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction"* (Rom. 15:4).

   We must take time to clarify Paul's key to understanding and applying the Old Testament Scriptures. To do so, we borrow from an account of a German theologian from the 19th/20th century Adolf Schlatter. Schlatter is reported to have once received the compliment of being a theologian who "stands on the Word of God." As recounted by Karl Heim and Earle Ellis, Schlatter replied, "Thank you, sir. But I don't stand on the Word of God; I stand under it."[13]

   Paul, using Schlatter's language, stood under the word of God, rather than

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[13] Ellis at 26.

"on it." For Paul, it was a matter of understanding what the Old Testament taught, by the insight and revelation of the Spirit. This is what Schlatter meant by standing under Scripture. It is contrasted to those who might know the Scriptures, but have no real understanding of them. These people will place their own ideas and theologies on the Scriptures in an effort to find support for their prior beliefs rather than trying to understand the Word of God and fit their beliefs under it.

For Paul, these people were walking in God's judgment as well as their own blindness. As Paul noted in Romans 11:7-8:

> What then? Israel failed to obtain what it was seeking. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day."

May we go to Scripture seeking God's aid in understanding the truths of Scripture and setting our lives under those truths. May we take care about ever going to Scripture to prove a belief we already have! That is dangerous ground. Similarly, when the word of God teaches us God's truth, may we stand firmly upon that truth as we reside under God's word.

3. *"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work."* (2 Tim. 3:15-16).

   Could you write letters and quote 16 Old Testament books? Have we stored the Word of God in our hearts and minds? Do we have Scripture memorized? How seriously do we really take Paul's admonitions on Scripture?

   We are handing out small cards that have a Scripture of Paul's written on them. There are 11 different cards in the mix being dispersed. Take one. Read it. Read it again. Keep reading it until you commit it to memory. Then, keep the card in a place where you will see it occasionally and make sure you keep the passage memorized. Then, later add another. Then another. Pretty soon your letters can read like Paul's!

On the following pages we produce the chart referenced early as the work of Earle Ellis. We will go into more detail on some aspects of the chart next lesson. As

you read his classification system, remember that "LXX" is the abbreviation for the Septuagint.

APPENDIX I (A)

QUOTATIONS IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

Classification[1]:
1 —in agreement with the LXX and the Hebrew.
2 —in agreement with the LXX against the Hebrew.
3 —in agreement with the Hebrew against the LXX.
4^2—at variance with the LXX and the Hebrew where they agree.
5^3—at variance with the LXX and the Hebrew where they vary.
* —There is only a slight variation from the LXX.
** —There is a difference in word order.

NT	OT	Classif.
Rom. 1.17	Hab. 2.4	5*
2.24	Isa. 52.5	5
3.4	Ps. 50(51).6	4*
3.10-12	Ps. 13(14).1-3	4
3.13a	Ps. 5.10	1
3.13b	Ps. 139(140).4	1
3.14	Ps. 9.28(10.7)	5
3.15-17	Isa. 59.7-8	5
3.18	Ps. 35(36).2	4*
4.3 (9, 22)	Gen. 15.6	2
4.7-8	Ps. 31(32).1-2	2
4.17	Gen. 17.5	1
4.18	Gen. 15.5	1
7.7	Exod. 20.17 (Deut. 5.21)	1
8.36	Ps. 43(44).23	1
9.7	Gen. 21.12	1
9.9	Gen. 18.10, 14	5
9.12	Gen. 25.23	1
9.13	Mal. 1.2-3	4**
9.15	Exod. 33.19	1
9.17	Exod. 9.16	5

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NT	OT	Classif.
Rom. 9.25	Hos. 2.23(25)	4
9.26	Hos. 1.10 (2.1)	5
9.27-8	Isa. 10.22-23	5
9.29	Isa. 1.9	2
9.33	Isa. 8.14+28.16	5
10.5	Lev. 18.5	4*
10.6-8	Deut. 30.12-14	5
10.11	Isa. 28.16	5
10.13	Joel 2.32 (3.5)	1
10.15	Isa. 52.7	5
10.16	Isa. 53.1	2
10.18	Ps. 18(19).5	2
10.19	Deut. 32.21	4*
10.20	Isa. 65.1	5* **
10.21	Isa. 65.2	2**
11.3	3(1) Kings 19.14	4
11.4	19.18	5
11.8	Isa. 29.10+Deut. 29.4(3)	4
11.9-10	Ps. 68(69).23-4	5
11.26-7	Isa. 59.20-1+27.9	5*
11.34	Isa. 40.13	5*
11.35	Job. 41.3	3
12.19	Deut. 32.35	5
12.20	Prov. 25.21-22	2
13.9	Deut. 5.17-21 (Exod. 20.13-17) +Lev. 19.18	1
14.11	Isa. 45.23 (+49.18)	5
15.3	Ps. 68(69).10	1
15.9	Ps. 17(18).50 (cf. 2 Kings 22.50)	4*
15.10	Deut. 32.43	2
15.11	Ps. 116(117).1	4*
15.12	Isa. 11.10	5*
15.21	Isa. 52.15	2**
1 Cor. 1.19	Isa. 29.14	5*
1.31	Jer. 9.24(23)	4
2.9	(Isa. 64.4+65.16)?	5
2.16	Isa. 40.13	5
3.19	Job 5.12-13	3
3.20	Ps. 93(94).11	4*
6.16	Gen. 2.24	2

NT	OT	Classif.
1 Cor. 9.9	Deut. 25.4	5*
10.7	Exod. 32.6	1
10.26	Ps. 23(24).1	1
14.21	Isa. 28.11-12	5
15.27	Ps. 8.7	4*
15.32	Isa. 22.13	2
15.45	Gen. 2.7	4
15.54	Isa. 25.8	5
15.55	Hos. 13.14	5
2 Cor. 4.13	Ps. 115(116).1(10)	1
6.2	Isa. 49.8	1
6.16	Lev. 26.11-12 (Ezek. 27.37)	4
6.17	Isa. 52.11-12	4
6.18	2 Kings (2 Sam.) 7.14	4
8.15	Exod. 16.18	3
9.9	Ps. 111(112).9	1
10.17	Jer. 9.24	4
13.1	Deut. 19.15	5*
Gal. 3.6	Gen. 15.6 (12.3; 18.18)	2
3.8	Gen. 12.3 (+18.18)	4
3.10	Deut. 27.26	5
3.11	Hab. 2.4	5*
3.12	Lev. 18.5	4*
3.13	Deut. 21.23	5
3.16	Gen. 22.18 (cf. 12.7; 13.15; 17.7)	1
4.27	Isa. 54.1	2
4.30	Gen. 21.10	4*
5.14	Lev. 19.18	1
Eph. 4.8	Ps. 67(68).19	4*
5.14	?	
5.31	Gen. 2.24	5
6.2-3	Deut. 5.16 (Exod. 20.12)	5
1 Tim. 5.18	Deut. 25.4 + (Matt. 10.10?)	2
2 Tim. 2.19	Num. 16.5 + (Isa. 26.13?)	3*