

Paul's Dealing with Problems

The New Testament does not systematically present theology. Rather, most NT writings are actually letters addressing a particular problem (and at least ten letters below respond to heretics). The chart below shows Paul's unique solution for each situation. The *key word* for that epistle is *italicized* (cf. NT Survey, 1:24).

Letter	Recipient's Problem	Paul's Solution
Galatians (Soteriology)	Heretics taught new believers that they must obey the Mosaic Law to be saved	Justification is by faith alone and not by keeping the Law
1 Thessalonians (Eschatology)	Heretics questioned Paul's church planting motives and the state of believers at Christ's Return if they had already died	They should prepare for the Rapture by seeing Paul's pure motives and being comforted over believers who died
2 Thessalonians (Eschatology)	Heretics taught the believers were in the Tribulation due to intense persecution so some quit their jobs and became lazy	The Day of the Lord (Tribulation) won't start until after the Church is removed and they must persevere without idleness
1 Corinthians (Ecclesiology)	Disorder in the church came from divisions, moral deviations, and false doctrines taught by heretics	Proper behavior where positional sanctification becomes practical results only from a true theology of the gospel
2 Corinthians (Ecclesiology)	Heretics undermined Paul's authority to advise the church	Paul defends his apostleship in his new covenant ministry to affirm the church's doctrinal foundation and giving
Romans (Soteriology)	Jew-Gentile struggles disrupted body life in confusion over the role of the Law and insensitivity to one another in gray areas	Living out God's righteousness achieved by justification through faith will bring unity before Paul arrives
Ephesians (Christology)	Jew-Gentile disunity within the church hindered their testimony before unbelievers	God's mystery of Jew-Gentile unity in the Church under Christ as Head must show itself in love for each other
Colossians (Christology)	Heretics led believers into combining legalism, asceticism, and angel worship	Christ is God (deity), so the church must worship Him alone in holy living
Philemon (Christology)	A Christian slave owner (Philemon) was tempted to mistreat his now-believing former slave, Onesimus, who had returned	This master must grant forgiveness to his former slave to model the reconciliation of believers to God through Christ
Philippians (Christology)	Concern over Paul's fate in prison was complicated by legalistic and libertine heretics and disunited women	Imitating Christ's attitude will give joy, humility, balance between "law extremes" and peace with God and man
1 Timothy (Ecclesiology)	Ascetic and speculative heretics threatened Timothy's leadership of the Ephesian church	Church order will follow if Timothy guards his personal life and doctrine and shares leadership with other godly men
Titus (Ecclesiology)	Heretics on Crete hindered the health of the newly planted churches	Teach believers sound conduct through qualified elders to silence accusations
2 Timothy (Ecclesiology)	Heretics and persecution of believers caused many believers to deny Christ	Persevere in sound doctrine by preaching and practicing God's Word despite hardship

Do you also know the issues *your* people face? Do you ignore them or *resolve* them within your church?