

Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:" (8:3), Paul justified the role of the nation of Israel by saying, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (9:1-3) After saying that Israel failed in its role of pursuing God's standard of righteousness by saying, "But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone;" (9:31-32), Paul immediately justified their zeal for God by saying, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." (10:1-2) After saying that God rejected Israel and received the Gentiles by saying, "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." (10:20-21), Paul immediately says that Israel will be reconciled by saying, "I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (11:1)

Thus, the epistle to the Romans purposes to bring unity to the Jewish peoples and the Gentile believers by explaining their joint role in divine election so that together they may fulfill God's call to take the Gospel to all nations.

Conclusion - The practical purpose of the epistle Romans reflects the third theme of the office and ministry of the God the Father in proclaiming the Gospel to the nations.

IX. Thematic Scheme

Introduction - Each book of the Holy Scriptures contains a three-fold thematic scheme in order to fulfill its intended purpose, which is to transform each child of God into the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). The primary, or foundational, theme of a book offers a central claim that undergirds everything written by the author. The secondary, or structural theme, of the book supports its primary theme by offering reasons and evidence for the central "claim" made by the author as it fully develops the first theme. Thus, the secondary theme is more easily recognized by biblical scholars than the other two themes because they provide the literary content of the book as they navigate the reader through the arguments embedded within the biblical text, thus revealing themselves more clearly.¹⁰¹ The third theme is imperative in that it calls the reader to a response based upon the central claim and supporting evidence offered by the author. Each child of God has been predestined to be conformed into the image and likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Scriptures, and they alone, have the power to accomplish this task. This is why a child of God can read the Holy Scriptures with a pure heart and experience a daily transformation taking place in his life, although he may not fully understand what is taking place in his life. In addition, the reason some children of God often do not see these biblical themes is because they have not fully yielded their lives to Jesus Christ, allowing transformation to take place by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Without a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit, a child of God is not willing to allow Him to manage his life and move him down the road that God predestined as his spiritual journey. This journey requires every participant to take up his cross daily and follow Jesus, and not every believer is willing to do this. In fact, every child of God chooses how far down this road of sacrifice he is willing to go. Very few of men and women of God fulfill their divine destinies by completing this difficult journey. In summary, the first theme drives the second theme, which develops the first theme, and together they demand the third theme, which is the reader's response.

A. Primary Theme (Foundational) of the Epistle of Romans: The Establishment of Church Doctrines - Introduction - The central theme of the Holy Bible is God's plan of redemption for mankind. This theme

¹⁰¹For an excellent discussion on the use of claims, reasons, and evidence in literature, see Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

finds its central focus in the Cross, where our Lord and Saviour died to redeem mankind. The central figure of the Holy Scriptures is the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the Cross is the place where man meets God and where we die to our selfish ambitions and yield our lives to the God who created all things. Therefore, the Holy Scriptures are not intended to be a precise record of ancient history. Rather, its intent is to provide a record of God's divine intervention in the history of mankind in order to redeem the world back to Himself through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on Calvary.

Every book of the Holy Bible makes a central claim that undergirds the arguments or message contained within its text. For example, the central claim of the Pentateuch is found in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD," to which all additional material is subordinate. The bulk of the material in the Old Testament is subordinate in that it serves as reasons and evidence to support this central claim. This material serves as the secondary theme, offering the literary structure of the book. In addition, the central claim calls for a response, which is stated in the following verse, "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut 6:5) Such a response is considered the third, imperative theme that runs through every book of the Holy Scriptures.

This central claim is the primary, or foundational, theme and is often obscured by the weight of evidence that is used to drive the central message, which weight of evidence makes up the secondary theme; and thus, it contains more content than the primary theme. Therefore, the secondary themes of the books of the Holy Scripture are generally more recognizable than the primary theme. Nevertheless, the central claim, or truth, must be excavated down to the foundation and made clearly visible in order to understand the central theme driving the arguments contained within the book. Only then can proper exegesis and sermon delivery be executed.

1. The Central Themes of the New Testament Epistles: Sanctification of the Believer - There are twenty-one epistles in the New Testament, which the early Church recognized as having apostolic authority so that they were collected into one body, circulated among the churches, and eventually canonized. While the Gospels emphasize the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus Christ in the process of justification of the believer, New Testament epistles emphasize the redemptive plan of the Holy Spirit as He works in the process of sanctification for each believer. Thus, the work of sanctification serves as the underlying theme of all twenty-one epistles. In addition, each one emphasizes a different aspect of this divine process of sanctification and they are organized together so that the New Testament is structured to reflect the part of our spiritual journey called sanctification. In order to express this structure, each of these epistles has different themes that are woven and knitted together into a unified body of teachings which will bring the believer through the process of sanctification and ready for the rapture of the Church into a place of rest in the glorious hope revealed in the book of Revelation. Therefore, the New Testament epistles were collected together by topic by the early Church.

Of the twenty-one epistles, there are thirteen Pauline epistles and eight designated as General, or Catholic, epistles. We can organize these twenty-one epistles into three major categories: (1) there are epistles that emphasize Church doctrine, which are the nine Pauline epistles of Romans to 2 Thessalonians; (2) there are those that deal with Church order and divine service, which are 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon;¹⁰² and (3) there are those that stress perseverance in the Christian faith, which are Hebrews and the seven General Epistles.¹⁰³ Within Hebrews and the General Epistles, we note that the first three epistles exhort the believer to persevere under persecutions, which come from without the Church (Hebrews, James, 1 Peter), while the other five epistles emphasize perseverance against false doctrines, which come from within (2 Peter, 1, 2, 3 John, Jude).

¹⁰²For the sake of developing thematic schemes, the epistle of Philemon will be grouped with the Pastoral Epistles as did the Church fathers.

¹⁰³For the sake of developing thematic schemes, the epistle of Hebrews will be grouped with the General Epistles, although many of the early Church fathers followed the tradition of grouping it with the Pauline epistles.

2. *The Central Theme of the Church Epistles: The Establishment of Church Doctrines* – Of the thirteen Pauline epistles, nine are addressed to seven particular churches. By the third century, the early Church fathers testified as to the emphasis that Paul placed upon church doctrine in his epistles. For example, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (A.D. 329 to 389) says that Paul wrote the Church epistles in order that the doctrines of the Church are “beyond question.”

“At this point of my discourse I am truly filled with wonder at the wise dispensation of the Holy Spirit; how He confined the Epistles of the rest to a small number, but to Paul the former persecutor gave the privilege of writing fourteen. For it was not because Peter or John was less that He restrained the gift; God forbid! But in order that the doctrine might be beyond question, He granted to the former enemy and persecutor the privilege of writing more, in order that we all might thus be made believers.” (*Lectures* 10.18) (*NPF2* 7)

Isidore of Pelusium (A.D. d. 450) calls Paul “the expounder of the heavenly doctrines.” (*Epistolarum* 1.7) (*PG* 78 col. 184C). In his preface to his commentaries on the Pauline Epistles, Theodoret of Cyrus (A.D. 393-466) writes, “I know to be sure how I cannot escape the tongue of the fault-finders when attempting to interpret the doctrine of the divine Paul.” (author’s translation)¹⁰⁴ These nine “Church” epistles establish the doctrines of the New Testament Church. Thus, we may call the first nine Pauline epistles “Church Epistles.” In these epistles Paul builds his Church doctrine upon the foundational teachings laid down by Christ Jesus in the Gospels. We acknowledge that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Tim 3:16) Thus, every book of the Bible will contain doctrine, but these other books do not “add” to Church doctrine; rather, they support the doctrine laid down in the Gospels by Jesus Christ and in these nine Pauline epistles. For example, in the Pastoral Epistles, Paul tells Timothy and Titus to teach sound doctrine (1 Tim 1:10, 2 Tim 4:3, Tit 1:9; 2:1), a doctrine that is not contained within the Pastoral Epistles themselves. Therefore, Paul must be referring to doctrine that he taught to the churches, and most certainly doctrine that is contained within the Church epistles. Another example can be found in Hebrews 6:1-2, which refers to the six foundational doctrines of the New Testament Church, doctrines that are not contained within the epistle of Hebrews. This epistle, rather, exhorts us to persevere in the divine doctrine that has previously been laid down, and a doctrine that is most certainly contained within the Church epistles.

In order to identify this New Testament doctrine, we must first go to the six foundational doctrines mentioned in Hebrews 6:1-2 in order to identify this doctrine. This passage tells us that everything Jesus Christ said and taught in the Gospels can be summed up in the six foundational doctrines of Christ listed in Hebrews 6:1-2.

Hebrews 6:1-2, “Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”

Here we find the six foundational doctrines of the New Testament Church, which were first laid down by Christ in the Gospels.

1. repentance from dead works
2. faith toward God
3. baptisms
4. laying on of hands
5. resurrection of the dead
6. eternal judgment

¹⁰⁴Theodoret, *Preface to Interpretation XIV Epistolarum Sancti Pauli Apostoli* (*PG* 82 col. 36A).

If one were to go through the four Gospels, he would find that all of Christ's teachings could be placed under one of these six doctrines. Later, the Heavenly Father used Paul to build upon these foundational doctrines through the Pauline epistles in order to establish the Church doctrinally. Before His departure, Jesus Christ told His disciples that He had many things to teach them, but they were not yet ready (John 16:12).

John 16:12, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

John 16:12 tells us that the message of the Gospel that Jesus Christ taught His disciples was still incomplete at the time of His departure. This implies that we should look to the Epistles to find its fullness. Therefore, it is upon these six foundational doctrines of Christ that Paul lays down the doctrines of the Church. Paul builds upon the two doctrines of repentance from dead works and faith toward God by teaching on the justification of the believer through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Paul builds upon the two doctrines of baptisms and of the laying on of hands by teaching on the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit. Paul builds his eschatology that Jesus began in the Gospels in the two doctrines of resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment by teaching on the future glorification of the Church, which falls under the divine foreknowledge and election of God the Father. Thus, the Church epistles can be grouped by the three-fold office and ministry of the Trinity.

B. Secondary Theme (Structural) of the Epistle of Romans – The Doctrine of Justification Through Faith in Jesus Christ - An Exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ – Introduction - The secondary themes of the books of the Holy Scriptures support the primary themes by offering reasons and evidence for the central "claim" of the book made by the author. Thus, the secondary themes are more easily recognized by biblical scholars than the other two themes because they provide the literary structure of the book as they navigate the reader through the arguments embedded within the biblical text, thus revealing themselves more clearly. For example, the central claim of the Pentateuch declares that the Lord God of Israel is the only God that man should serve, and man is to love the Lord God with all of his heart, mind, and strength, a statement found in the Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4-5, which is the foundational theme of the Old Testament. The books of Hebrew poetry provide evidence to this claim by expounding upon how man is to love God with all of his heart as its secondary theme. The books of the prophets provide evidence to this claim by expounding upon how man is to love God with all of his mind as its secondary theme, as he set his hope in the coming of the Messiah to redeem mankind. The historical books provide evidence to this claim by expounding upon how man is to love God with all of his strength as its secondary theme.

The central claim of the four Gospel writers is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, which is the foundational theme of this division of the Holy Scriptures. In addition, each Gospel writer offers evidence as its secondary theme to support his claim. The Gospel of John offers the five-fold testimony of God the Father, John the Baptist, the miracles of Jesus, the Old Testament Scriptures, and the testimony of Jesus Christ Himself as its secondary theme. Matthew expounds upon the testimony of the Old Testament Scriptures as its secondary theme; Mark expounds upon the testimony of the miracles of Jesus as its secondary theme; Luke expounds upon the testimony of John the Baptist and other eye-witnesses and well as that of the apostles in the book of Acts as its secondary theme.

The central claim of the Pauline Church Epistles is that the Gospel of Jesus Christ alone how the power to redeem and transform man into the image of Jesus, which is the foundational theme of this division of the Holy Scriptures. The epistle of Romans supports this claim by offering evidence of mankind's depravity and God's plan of redemption to redeem him as its secondary theme. The epistles of Ephesians and Philippians expound upon the role of God the Father in His divine foreknowledge as their secondary theme; the epistles of Colossians and Galatians expound upon the role of Jesus Christ as the head of the Church as their secondary theme; the epistles of 1, 2 Thessalonians and 1, 2 Corinthians expound upon the role of the Holy Spirit in sanctifying the believers as their secondary theme.

The central claim of the Pastoral Epistles is that believers must serve God through the order of the New Testament Church. The epistles of 1, 2 Timothy expound upon how to serve the Lord within the Church with a pure heart, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of Titus expounds upon how to serve the Lord within

the Church with a renewed mind, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of Philemon expounds upon how to serve the Lord within the Church with a genuine lifestyle, which is its secondary theme.

The central claim of the General Epistles is that believers must persevere in the Christian faith in order to obtain eternal redemption. The epistles of Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter modify this theme to reflect perseverance from persecutions from without the Church. The epistle of Hebrews expounds upon the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of James expounds upon a lifestyle of perseverance through the joy of the Holy Spirit, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of 1 Peter expounds upon our hope of divine election through God the Father, which is its secondary theme. The epistles of 2 Peter, 1, 2, 3, John and Jude reflect perseverance from false doctrines from within. The epistle of 2 Peter expounds upon growing in the knowledge of God's Word with a sound mind, which is its secondary theme. The epistles of 1, 2, 3 John expound upon walking in fellowship with God and one another with a pure heart, which is its secondary theme. The epistle of Jude expounds how living a godly lifestyle with our bodies, which is its secondary theme.

The Apocalypse of John, though not considered an epistle, emphasizes the glorification of the Church, giving believers a vision of the hope that is laid up before them as a source of encouragement for those who persevere until the end. The central claim of the book of Revelation is that Jesus Christ is coming to take His Bride the Church to Glory. The secondary theme supports this claim with the evidence of Great Tribulation Period.

1. The Secondary Theme of the Church Epistles - Within the nine Pauline "Church" epistles there are three epistles that serve as witnesses of the doctrine of justification through Jesus Christ (Romans, Galatians, Colossians); three serve as witnesses of the doctrine of sanctification by the Holy Spirit (Romans, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians); and three testify of the doctrine of glorification by God the Father (Romans, Ephesians, Philippians). Note that the secondary epistles of Thessalonians and Corinthians can be considered as one witness because they share the same theme with their primary epistles. Noting that the epistle of Romans reflects all three aspects of Church doctrine in his exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the early Church fathers recognized the doctrinal preeminence of the epistle of Romans. For example, Theodoret of Cyrrus writes, "The epistle to the Romans has been placed first, as containing the most full and exact representation of the Christian doctrine, in all its branches; but some say, that it has been so placed out of respect to the city to which it was sent, as presiding over the whole world." (PG 82 col. 44B)¹⁰⁵ In the same way that the Gospel of John serves as the foundational book of the Gospels as well as the entire New Testament, the epistle of Romans serves as the foundational epistle of the Church epistles because it carries all three themes that the other eight epistles will build upon.

As mentioned above, Paul's church doctrine builds upon the six-fold doctrine of Christ listed in Hebrews 6:1-2. This means that all of the Pauline church doctrine can be grouped within one of these six foundational doctrines of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. This is what Paul was referring to in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11 and Ephesians 2:20 when he said that he was laying the foundation of Church doctrine in which Jesus Christ Himself was the foundation.

1 Corinthians 3:10-11, "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Also,

Ephesians 2:20, "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;"

¹⁰⁵See Nathaniel Lardner, *The Works of Nathaniel Lardner*, vol. 5 (London: Joseph Ogle Robinson, 1829), 17.

Thus, Paul’s doctrine can be placed into three groups of doctrine: (1) the foreknowledge, calling and glorification of God the Father, (2) the justification by Jesus Christ His Son, and (3) the sanctification of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:29). In fact, the six foundational doctrines of Hebrews 6:1-2 can also be placed under the same three-fold office and ministry of God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son and the Holy Spirit by placing two doctrines under each one. Therefore, we will find that the themes of each of the Pauline “Church” epistles finds itself grouped under Paul’s three-fold grouping of justification, sanctification and glorification, and this three-fold grouping is laid upon the six-fold foundation of:

1. Repentance from dead works	Justification	Jesus Christ
2. Faith toward God	Justification	Jesus Christ
3. The doctrine of baptisms	Sanctification	Holy Spirit
4. Laying on of hands	Sanctification	Holy Spirit
5. Resurrection of the dead	Glorification	God the Father
6. Eternal judgment	Glorification	God the Father

The doctrine of faith towards God builds upon the doctrine of repentance from dead works, which is the doctrine of Justification; for we must first repent of our sins in order to receive Christ’s sacrificial death for us. The doctrine of the laying on of hands builds upon the doctrine of baptisms, which is the doctrine of Sanctification. After partaking of the three baptisms (baptism into the body of Christ, water baptism, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit), we move into our calling and anointing through the laying on of hands. The doctrine of eternal judgment builds upon the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, which is the doctrine of Glorification. These are the three parts of our redemption that are addressed by the six foundational doctrines that Jesus Christ laid down in the Gospels and Acts. Thus, Paul builds upon these three foundational doctrines of Christ within his nine “Church” epistles.

The epistle of Romans plays a key role in the Church Epistles in that it lays a foundation of doctrines upon which the other eight Epistles build their themes. A mediaeval proverb once said, “All roads lead to Rome.”¹⁰⁶ This means that anywhere in the ancient Roman Empire, when someone embarked on the Roman road system, if one traveled it long enough, it would lead him to the city of Rome. In a similar way, as all roads lead to Rome, so do all of Paul’s Church Epistles proceed from the book of Romans. In other words, the themes of the other eight Church Epistles build upon the theme of Romans. Thus, the epistle of Romans serves as a roadmap that guides us through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ and into the process of sanctification wrought by the Holy Spirit and finally into the Father’s eternal plan in the lives of mankind through His foreknowledge and divine election, which themes are further developed in the other eight Church Epistles. However, the epistle of Romans is presented largely from the perspective of God the Father divinely orchestrating His plan of redemption for all mankind while the other eight epistles place emphasis upon the particular roles of one of the God-head: the Father, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. The systematic teachings laid forth in the book of Romans serves as a foundation upon which the other eight epistles to New Testament churches are built. For example, the letter to the Ephesians places emphasis upon the Father’s divine election and equipping of the Church in order to fulfill the purpose and plan of God the Father upon this earth. Philippians emphasizes partnership as we give ourselves to God the Father in order to accomplish His will on this earth. The epistle to Colossians emphasizes the preeminence of Christ Jesus over the Church. Galatians emphasizes the theme of our deliverance and justification by faith in Jesus Christ alone. The theme of 1 and 2 Thessalonians emphasizes the sanctification of the whole man, spirit, soul, and body in preparing us for Christ’s Second Coming. 1 and 2 Corinthians take us to the Cross and shows us the life of

¹⁰⁶The *Milliarium Aureum* was a monument erected in the central forum the ancient city of Rome by Emperor Caesar Augustus. All of the roads built by the Romans were believed to begin at this point and transgress throughout the Empire. The road system of the Roman Empire was extraordinary, extending east to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and west to the British Isles, and north into central Europe and south into northern Africa. See Christian Hülsen, *The Roman Forum: Its History and Its Monuments*, trans. Jesse Benedict Carter (New York: G. E. Stechert & Co., 1906), 79; Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, eds. *The Apostolic Fathers With Justin Martyr and Ireneaus*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, vol. 1 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 1.

sanctification as we live in unity with one another so that the gifts of the Spirit can manifest through the body of Christ, which serves to edify the believers. Paul deals with each of these themes systematically in the epistle to the Romans. Thus, these other eight Church epistles emphasize and expand upon individual themes found in the book of Romans, all of which are built upon the three-fold office and ministry of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For this reason, Romans serves as a foundation of the doctrine of Christ Jesus upon which all other New Testament epistles are built.

a) *The Doctrine of the Office and Ministry of God the Father* - The epistle of *Ephesians* is built upon the theme of God the Father's office and ministry of orchestrating a divine plan of redemption for mankind. While *Romans* takes a broad view of the Father's redemptive plan for all of mankind, *Ephesians* focuses entirely upon the role of the Church in this great plan. And in order for the believer to partake of this divine plan, the Father provides His spiritual blessings in heavenly places (1:3) so that we, the Church, might accomplish His divine purpose and plan on earth. Man's role is to walk worthy of this calling (4:1) and to fight the spiritual warfare through the Word of God (6:10-13). The epistle of *Philippians*, which also emphasizes the work of God the Father, reveals how the believer is to serve God the Father so that He can fulfill His divine purpose and plan on earth. In this epistle the believer is to partner and give to support God's servants who are accomplishing God's purposes (1:5) and in turn, God will provide all of his needs (4:19). While *Ephesians* places emphasis upon the Father's role in the Church's glorification, *Philippians* emphasized the believer's role in fulfilling the Father's divine plan of redemption. *Ephesians* reveals how it looks in Heaven as the Father works redemption for the Church, and *Philippians* reveals how the Church looks when it is fulfilling the Father's redemptive plan. Reading *Ephesians* is like sitting in Heaven while looking down upon earth and getting a divine perspective of the Father's role in redemption, while reading *Philippians* is like sitting on the front row of a local church watching men work through the Father's role in redemption. Thus, the epistle of *Philippians* is a mirror image of *Ephesians*.

b) *Jesus Christ the Son* - The epistle of *Colossians* reveals the Lordship of Jesus Christ over the Church and His preeminence over all Creation. Man's role is to fulfill God's will through the indwelling of Christ in him (1:9; 4:12). The epistle of *Galatians*, which also emphasizes the work of Jesus the Son in our redemption, teaches us how Jesus Christ has delivered us from the bondages of this world (1:4). Man's role is to walk as a new creature in Christ in order to partake of his liberties in Christ (6:15). While the epistle of *Colossians* emphasizes the role of Jesus Christ our Lord in our justification, *Galatians* emphasizes our role in having faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior. *Colossians* reveals how it looks in Heaven as Jesus the Son works redemption, while *Galatians* reveals how the Church looks when it is walking in the Lordship of Jesus Christ and giving Him preeminence in our daily lives. Reading *Colossians* is like sitting in Heaven while looking down upon earth and getting a divine perspective of the Son's role in redemption, while reading *Galatians* is like sitting on the front row of a local church watching men work through the Son's role in redemption. Thus, the epistle of *Galatians* is a mirror image of *Colossians*.

c) *God the Holy Spirit* - The epistles of *1 and 2 Thessalonians* teach us the office of the Holy Spirit, which is to sanctify the believer in spirit, soul and body (5:23) in order to prepare him for the Second Coming of Christ Jesus (1:10). The epistles of *1 and 2 Corinthians*, which also emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in our redemption, reveals how the believer is to live a crucified life of walking in love and unity with fellow believers (16:13-16) in order to allow the gifts of the Spirit to work in and thru him as he awaits the Second Coming of Christ (1:7). While the epistles to the *Thessalonians* emphasize the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of sanctification, the epistles to the *Corinthians* emphasize our role in this process. *1 and 2 Thessalonians* reveal how it looks in Heaven as the Holy Spirit works redemption, while *1 and 2 Corinthians* show us how the Church looks when it is going through the difficult process of sanctification through the work of the Holy Spirit. Reading *1 and 2 Thessalonians* is like sitting in Heaven while looking down upon earth and getting a divine perspective of the Holy Spirit's role in redemption, while reading *1 and 2 Corinthians* is like sitting on the front row of a local church watching men work through the Holy

Spirit's role in redemption. Thus, the epistles of Corinthians are a mirror image of the epistles of Thessalonians.

Finally, the epistle of Romans deals briefly with all three doctrines in systematic order as Paul the apostle expounds upon the Gospel of Jesus Christ (1:16-17) in order to establish the saints in the Christian faith (16:25-27).

d) Illustration of Emphasis of Two Roles in the Pauline Epistles – We find a discussion of the important of the two-fold aspect of the writer and the reader in Booth-Colomb-Williams' book *The Craft of Research*.¹⁰⁷ These three professors explain that when a person writes a research paper he must establish a relationship with the intended reader. He does this by creating a role for himself as the writer and a role for the reader to play. This is because conversation is not one-sided. Rather, conversation, and a written report, involved two parties, the reader as well as the writer. Thus, we see how God has designed the Pauline epistles to emphasize the role the writer, by which we mean divine inspiration, and the reader, who plays the role of a believer endeavoring to become indoctrinated with God's Word.

Perhaps a good illustration of this two-fold aspect of the Trinity's role and perspective of redemption being emphasized in Ephesians, Colossian and 1 and 2 Thessalonians and man's role and perspective being emphasized in Philippians, Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians is found in a dream that the Lord gave to me in the mid-1990's. I was serving in my church Calvary Cathedral International in the ministry of helps as an altar worker. This meant that during each altar call we were to follow those who responded to the altar call back into a prayer room and pray with them. One Sunday morning the Lord gave me a dream in which I found myself in my local church during an altar call. As people responded and began to step out into the aisle and walk forward I saw them immediately transformed into children of light. In other words, I saw this transformation taking place in the spiritual realm, though in the natural we see nothing but a person making his way down the aisle. However, I saw these people transformed from sinners into saints in their spirits. I later made my way to church that morning, keenly aware of my impressionable dream a few hours ago. During church the altar call was made, people responded and I followed them into the prayer room along with the associate pastor and other altar workers. Suddenly, the associate pastor, Tom Leuther, who was over the altar work, received an emergency call and had to leave the prayer room. He looked at me and quickly asked me to lead this brief meeting by speaking to those who had responded and turn them over to prayer ministers. As I stood up and began to speak to these people I remembered my dream and was very aware of the incredible transformation that each one of them had made. Thus, Ephesians, Colossian and 1 and 2 Thessalonians discussion redemptive doctrine from a spiritual perspective while Philippians, Galatians and 1 and 2 Corinthians discuss doctrine from a natural, practical perspective, which we see being worked out in the daily lives of believers. In the natural we see a dirty sinner weeping before the altar, but with our spiritual eyes we see a pure and holy saint clothed in white robes.

2. *The Secondary Theme of the Epistle of Romans* - In identifying the secondary theme of the New Testament epistles, we must keep in mind that most of Paul's epistles are built upon the format of presenting a central theme, or argument, that runs throughout the entire epistle. This central theme is usually found within the first few verses of each epistle, and often within the closing verses. The first part of the Pauline epistles usually gives the doctrinal basis for this argument, and the last part gives the practical side of living by this doctrine. So it is with the epistle to the Romans, which teaches doctrine in 1-11 and application of this doctrine in 12-16. In addition, Paul builds his general argument by developing a number of specific arguments. A reader must not lose sight of this general argument, or central theme, as he interprets the specific arguments; for the major argument undergirds the minor ones. For the Church Epistles, the foundational theme is the establishment of Church doctrine. In addition, each Church epistle has a unique secondary theme that emphasizes a particular aspect of this Church Doctrine. Therefore, as a collection, the

¹⁰⁷Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 17-25.

nine Church epistles establish the doctrines of the New Testament Church, presenting the doctrines that are sufficient for our redemption.

The secondary, or structural, themes of each the New Testament epistles can be found in the open verses or passages of each book, and often in the closing verses. This is certainly the case with the epistle to the Romans. The opening verse of Romans contains the phrase “separated unto the gospel of God.” Therefore, under the foundational theme of the establishment of the doctrines of the New Testament Church, the secondary theme of the epistle to the Romans is to reveal God the Father’s plan of redemption for mankind through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations for their obedience towards faith in God, which is presented in Romans 1-11. Thus, this exposition of redemption is largely viewed from the role of God the Father is planning man’s redemption.¹⁰⁸

The secondary theme of the epistle of Romans is the doctrine of justification through faith in Jesus Christ, a theme that has long been identified scholars. For example, *The Muratorian Canon*, an ancient Latin document dated around A.D. 200, tells us that Paul the apostle wrote the epistle to this church at Rome in order to explain the order of the Holy Scriptures and how all of them pointed to Christ, saying “As to the epistles of Paul...and then to the Romans on the rule of the Old Testament Scriptures, and also to show them that Christ is the first object in these.” (*Fragments of Caius* 3.3) (*ANF* 5) This is why we see Paul using many Old Testament passages and themes in order to explain to the Gentile church in Rome that the Gospel has always been intended for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews, that it is not a “Jewish Gospel,” but Good News for all mankind. Thus, this Epistle expounds on God the Father’s plan of redemption for all of mankind. In fact, the epistle of Romans can be described as an exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In his prologue to the epistle of Romans, Martin Luther notes the Epistle’s emphasis on the Gospel in his acknowledgment of the preeminence of Romans, saying, “This letter [Romans] is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel.”¹⁰⁹ John Calvin says the opening verses of this Epistle serve as a clear, but concise, definition and description of the “Gospel.”¹¹⁰ This Epistle offers a lengthy exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; for it goes into great depth describing the depraved condition of sinful man, his need for justification by faith alone, and his need for a lifestyle of faith in order to reach his future glorification. Thus, John Calvin describes the theme of Romans as justification by faith, saying, “And so he entereth into the principal question of the whole Epistle, viz., that we are justified by faith; wherein he is occupied unto the end of the fifth chapter.”¹¹¹ In his prologue to the epistle of Romans, William Tyndale writes, “Forasmuch as this epistle is the principal and most excellent part of the new Testament and most pure evangelion, that is to say, glad tidings, and that we call gospel...”¹¹²

C. Third Theme (Supportive) of the Epistle of Romans - The Crucified Life of the Believer (Offering Our Lives as a Living Sacrifice to Take the Gospel to the Nations) – Introduction - The third theme of each book of the New Testament is a call by the author for the reader to apply the central truth, or claim, laid down in the book to the Christian life. It is a call to a lifestyle of crucifying the flesh and taking up one’s Cross daily to follow Jesus. Every child of God has been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29), and every child of God faces challenges as well as failures in the pursuit of his Christian journey. For example, the imperative theme of the Old Testament is that God’s children are to serve the Lord God with all of their heart, mind, and strength, and love their neighbour as themselves (Deut 6:4-5).

¹⁰⁸Leon Morris compares the frequency of the words θεός (God) (at least 153 times) and Χριστός (Christ) (65 times) to conclude the epistle of Romans exemplifies “the dominance of the God-theme.” See Leon Morris, “The Theme of Romans,” *Apostolic History and the Gospel: Biblical and Historical Essays Presented to F.F. Bruce*, eds. W. Ward Gasque and Ralph P. Martin (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1970), 263.

¹⁰⁹Martin Luther, *Preface to the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans*, trans. Andrew Thornton [on-line]; accessed 6 March 2010; available from http://www.ccel.org/l/luther/romans/pref_romans.html; Internet.

¹¹⁰John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. Christopher Rosdell, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1844), 4-5, 7.

¹¹¹John Calvin, *Commentary Upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*, trans. Christopher Rosdell, ed. Henry Beveridge (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1844), xxiv.

¹¹²William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures*, ed. Henry Walter (Cambridge: The University Press, 1848), 484.

The child of God cannot fulfill his divine destiny of being conformed into the image of Jesus without yielding himself and following the plan of redemption that God avails to every human being. This 4-fold, redemptive path is described in Romans 8:29-20 as predestination, calling, justification, and glorification. The phase of justification can be further divided into regeneration, indoctrination, divine service, and perseverance. Although each individual will follow a unique spiritual journey in life, the path is the same in principle for every believer since it follows the same divine pattern described above. This allows us to superimpose one of three thematic schemes upon each book of the Holy Scriptures in order to vividly see its imperative theme. Every book follows a literary structure that allows either (1) the three-fold scheme of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: or (2) the scheme of spirit, soul, and body of man; or (3) the scheme of predestination, calling, justification (regeneration, indoctrination, divine service, and perseverance), and glorification in some manner.

1. The Third Imperative Theme of the Church Epistles - Thus, the nine Church Epistles emphasize the office and ministry of God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of these epistles also reveals a central truth about our Christian life, or a secret truth, or a divine guiding principle, by which we can walk victoriously in this life.

a) God the Father. According to *Ephesians*, the way that God the Father fulfills His divine plan through the Church is by our submission to one another (Eph 4:1-2, 5:21) and praying in the Spirit (Eph 6:18); thus, the enemy of our divine destiny is putting on the old man and walking like the Gentiles in their futile minds (Eph 4:17). *Philippians* expands upon this central truth by explaining the secret to God supplying all of our needs when we take care of God's servants first (Phil 2:20); thus, the enemy to having our needs met is selfishness (Phil 2:21).

b) Jesus the Son. According to *Colossians* the secret of walking in the fullness and riches and completeness of Christ is by setting our minds on things above (Col 3:1-2); thus, the enemy of a full life in Christ is minding these earthly doctrines (Col 2:20-23). *Galatians* expands upon this central truth by telling us the secret to walking in liberty from the bondages of this world is by being led by the Spirit (Gal 5:16); thus, the enemy of our freedom is walking in the flesh, which brings us back into bondage (Gal 5:17).

c) God the Holy Spirit. *1 Thessalonians* reveals to us that the way we are motivated and encouraged to go through the process of sanctification is by looking for and waiting expectantly for the Second Coming of Christ; thus, the enemy of our sanctification is being ignorant of His Second Coming and pending judgment. *1 Corinthians* expands upon this central truth of sanctification by telling us that the secret to walking in the gifts of the Spirit is by walking in unity within the body of Christ (1 Cor 1:10); thus, the enemy of walking in the gifts is strife and division (1 Cor 1:11).

d) Summary - All three of these doctrines (justification, sanctification and glorification) reveal the process that God is taking every believer through in order to bring him from spiritual death and separation from God into His eternal presence, which process we call divine election. God's will for every human being is justification through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on Calvary as He serves as our Great High Priest at the right hand of the Father, into sanctification by the Holy Spirit and into divine service through the laying on of hands, until we obtain glorification and immortality by the resurrection from the dead and are judged before the throne of God. If God be for us, who can be against us? Thus, the nine Church Epistles emphasize the office and ministry of God the Father, God the Son Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit.

2. The Third Imperative Theme of the Epistle of Romans - The third theme of each of Paul's church epistles is an emphasis on how to apply the doctrinal truths laid down in the epistle to the Christian life. It is a life of crucifying the flesh and taking up our Cross daily to follow Him. This is the emphasis in Romans 12:1 to 15:33 as Paul calls the church to offer themselves as living sacrifices and serve according to their proportion

of faith in an effort to bring all nations to faith in Christ Jesus. Notice how Paul opens and closes the epistle of Romans with the same phrase in 1:5 and 16:26 about obedience to the faith among all nations.

Romans 1:5, “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:”

Romans 16:26, “But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith:”

These are key verses in understanding the supportive theme of the book of Romans; for when a person is living a crucified life, his conduct will testify of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to his community, society and nation. Every child of God has been predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ (Rom 8:29). The epistle of Romans emphasizes one aspect of this conformity through the crucified life of faith and obedience in Him.

Ephesians – God’s Role	Philippians – Man’s Role	Colossians – God’s Role	Galatians – Man’s Role	1&2 Thessalonians – God’s	1&2 Corinthians – Man’s Role
Foreknowledge Of the Father		Justification Thru Jesus		Sanctification of Holy Spirit	
Romans Justification Thru God the Father (Romans 8:29-30)					
Church Epistles - Doctrine					

Figure 1 – The Themes of the Pauline Church Epistles

X. Literary Structure

The literary structure of the epistle of Romans must follow the thematic scheme of the book. It is important to note that such a breakdown of this book of the Holy Bible was not necessarily intended by the original author, but it is being used as a means of making the interpretation easier. It is hoped that this summary and outline can identify the underlying themes of the book, as well as the themes of its major divisions, sections and subsections. Then individual verses can more easily be understood in light of the emphasis of the immediate passages in which they are found.

In looking for a structure to the epistle to the Romans, we first look into its secondary theme, which is the exposition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. More specifically, this exposition is presented in the form of a presentation of God the Father’s divine plan of redemption for mankind, both for the Church (1-8) and for the nation of Israel (9-11). At the conclusion of Paul’s exposition of God’s plan to redeem the Church we find a summary of the Father’s four-fold divine plan of redemption in Romans 8:29-30 as predestination, calling, justification and glorification.

Romans 8:29-30, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”

In the Epistle of Romans Paul’s presentation of the Father’s four-fold plan of redemption will focus primarily upon the Father’s work of justification in redeeming mankind through His Son Jesus Christ, while