

## The Letters

### St. John's Lenten Bible Study

- The Letters, or Epistles, include the Pauline Epistles: Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and the General or Catholic Epistles: Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-2-3 John, Jude
- Although all the Pauline epistles are attributed to Paul, scholars are divided as to what letters he penned himself, at least 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1-2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon, Romans are considered to be genuine letters of Paul, the other Pauline epistles of unknown authorship were written by those who used Paul's name (this was common in that time).
- "Catholic" epistles aren't a reference to the Catholic Church. Instead, "Catholic" means general. Since in ancient times attribution (or using someone else's name) was common in writing, we aren't sure exactly who wrote these. For instance, James could have been written by James, the brother of Jesus, but many scholars think this might not be the case, since the author of James doesn't mention a special connection to Jesus.
- Epistles served an important function in the early church, as they offered guidance and blessing to new Christian communities (i.e. at Corinth, Thessalonica, Ephesus, etc.). They explicated the Christian faith and answered theological and practical questions

#### Questions:

1. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is the longest epistle, and, arguably, Paul's best. He explains justification by faith and assurance of salvation. Is there a section of Romans you find most helpful?
2. Jude is the second-to-last book in the New Testament. It is also short (being one chapter and 25 verses). Jude *might* have been a brother of Jesus, but don't know if James, Jude's brother, was indeed the brother of Jesus (although many ancient theologians and church fathers thought he was). Jude warns against *apostasy* (falling away from the faith) and announces that God will have wrath for those who apostatize. It seems like there are two competing attributes of God: God's grace and God's wrath. Is this a contradiction? How do we reconcile these (in terms of the Epistle of Jude, and in the wider context of the Pauline and Catholic epistles)?