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*Salvific Intentionality in 1 Corinthians: How Paul Cultivates the  
Missional Imagination of the Corinthian Community*

by Scott Goode

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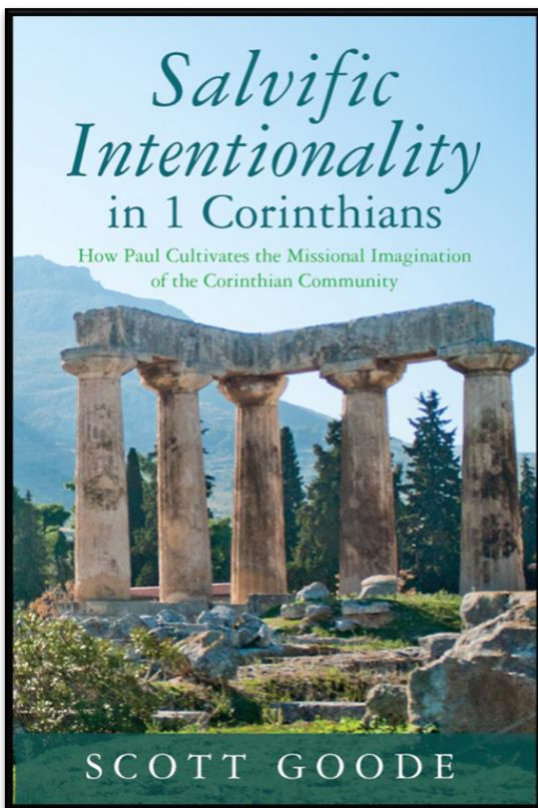
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## New Title from Scott Goode

### *Salvific Intentionality in 1 Corinthians:*

### *How Paul Cultivates the Missional Imagination of the Corinthian Community*



There are few matters more important than God's mission in the world. This book offers a fresh contribution to a long-standing debate in Pauline and missional studies regarding the apparent absence of a missionary mandate for the churches of the New Testament. Through a literary and socio-rhetorical study of 1 Corinthians, and in conversation with the emerging discipline of social identity theory, this book invites the reader to consider how Paul's missional expectations may have been received and put into practice in first-century Corinth by the first readers. Along the way some new lines of inquiry are opened for certain texts which have remained for a long time in a state of scholarly stalemate. But these technical discussions give way to a larger goal: to offer a missiology in action, in all its Corinthian complexity. Could such an approach inform a robust missional identity for the church of today? As the Western church searches for a new self-understanding in an increasingly post-Christian culture, the intention of this book is to cultivate the missional imagination of contemporary believers for their ongoing participation in God's mission in the world.

**Scott Goode** is an ordained priest who pastors an Anglican church in regional New South Wales, Australia. He holds post-graduate qualifications in New Testament studies with a focus on the Corinthian Correspondence.



**What was the reason for which you wrote this book?**

There is a long-standing academic debate in Pauline and missional studies regarding an apparent absence of a missionary mandate for the churches of the New Testament—I call this “the great omission.” I believe this deserves an answer from the perspective of a New Testament study and what better book to choose than 1 Corinthians. Perhaps uniquely among the letters of the New Testament is it more possible, and necessary, to probe at the underlying circumstance that occasion Paul’s writing. Given there is limited analysis of the missionary character of 1 Corinthians, I wanted to map a Corinthian missiology in action, and do so primarily with Paul’s readers in view rather than simply the apostle himself.

**What does this contribute to the scholarly discussion?**

In this monograph I ground an ecclesial missiology in a New Testament study of 1 Corinthians. I trace horizontal salvific language and concepts throughout the letter. However, this is not just a literary study—it is also a socio-rhetorical study that interacts with the emerging discipline of social identity theory. The result is that I invite the reader to “hear” along with Paul’s first readers how any missional expectation would have been heard and implemented in ancient Corinth.

**How will pastors benefit from reading it?**

I offer a comprehensive literature review, and detailed analysis, of key texts in 1 Corinthians including 1 Cor 5:1–13; 7:10–16, 8:1—11:1; and 14:20–25. Therefore, in addition to a missional reading of these passages, I explore pastoral issues of church discipline, mixed marriage, moral formation, ethics, and church gatherings. Moreover, by grounding missiology in the reality of the first century, I invite the pastor to relate the text to contemporary pastoral realities that correspond to such scenarios. Finally, in my conclusion I apply my findings to contemporary church practices thinking about missional identity, ecclesial boundaries, and the purpose of church gatherings.

**Are there any new interpretations you offer within 1 Corinthians?**

My analysis of 1 Cor 7:10-16 offers a new grammatical-rhetorical argument to the long-standing debate about the translation of 1 Cor 7:16. Thus I prefer the NRSV reading of positive salvific possibilities rather than typical translations which frame it more negatively. Additionally, I offer a unique argument for an intra-ecclesial reading of 1 Cor 14:22. There are also many new observations of the missionary character of the letter including that the early Christian community was “untidy” with porous boundaries between insiders and outsiders. The monograph is unique in offering a sustained study of horizontal salvific language and concepts throughout the letter.

## **What does your book offer for church practices in a post-Christendom context?**

In my concluding chapter I apply my findings from 1 Corinthians to contemporary church practices. I invite my readers to consider the ways in which Paul fostered a missional identity in his own readers. The minority status of early Pauline communities in large cities in which pagan idolatry was ubiquitous may provide increasing points of comparison in how contemporary Christians ought to think through complex social and ethical issues. A key finding of my study is the relationship between insiders and outsiders in ancient Corinth and I propose that contemporary church boundaries ought to be more porous and (some) gatherings more orientated towards outsiders. Finally, I converse with Leslie Newbigin's work to propose a comprehensive socio-ethical and verbal expression of ecclesial mission-commitment.

**Excerpt from *Salvific Intentionality in 1 Corinthians:*  
*How Paul Cultivates the Missional Imagination of the Corinthian Community***

As a pastor and a student of the New Testament I believe there are few matters more important than the mission of God in the world. This book is my contribution to a long-standing debate, in Pauline and missional studies, regarding the apparent absence of a missionary mandate for the churches of the New Testament. I have chosen 1 Corinthians for two reasons. First, I find myself fascinated by both the diversity and specificity of issues within it. Perhaps uniquely among the letters of the New Testament it is more possible, and necessary, to probe at the underlying circumstances that occasion Paul's writing. Such opportunities, I will argue, provide us with unique observations of a missiology in action. Secondly, I felt that what was missing from the relevant literature was a sustained study of the missionary character of this letter. Such an investigation lends itself to delving beyond Paul's stated missional expectations and considering the perspective of the living community to whom the text is written—how Paul's instructions nurtured their missional imagination in the reality of first-century life in Corinth. To this end, throughout the book there is an invitation to "hear" along with those first readers how Paul's missional expectations may have been received and put into practice. How, for example, did a Christian wife convey a salvific influence upon her unbelieving husband and children? How did unbelievers come to be so readily present in the early Christian gatherings of Corinth? And how did the themes of temple and glory nurture in them a more confident missional identity?

These questions, and others like them, are important. My intention is not simply to contribute to an academic debate but to observe, through Paul's letter, the mission of God being worked out in ancient Corinth. Along the way I offer some new lines of inquiry for certain texts, the interpretations of which have for some time remained in a state of scholarly stalemate. But these technical discussions give way to what I hope is a larger goal: to offer a missiology from below and in action, in all its Corinthian complexity.

Could such an approach inform a robust missional identity for us today? As Christianity continues its sharp decline in the West, perhaps there is something we can learn from the way in which Paul addresses the Corinthian community. These early Christians were a tiny minority in a large city in which pagan idolatry was ubiquitous. Moreover, they themselves were plagued by internal strife and were hardly ready evangelists equipped to take the gospel to their city. Notwithstanding, Paul invited them to embrace a missional identity from which they were to act for the salvific interests of others in a complex socioreligious environment. As the contemporary church searches for a new self-understanding in an increasingly secular and pluralistic context, the missiological vision of this first-century letter may be just what we need. While primarily an academic contribution, I also wrote this book as a pastor. My hope is that practitioners will also be encouraged—both professional ministers and interested lay leaders—and that our own missiological imagination would be cultivated for our time and context.

**Praise for *Salvific Intentionality in 1 Corinthians*:  
How Paul Cultivates the Missional Imagination of the Corinthian Community**

Scott Goode has effectively combined the fruits of first-class research (primary and secondary) with warm pastoral experience. His detailed analysis of the text of 1 Corinthians and his engagement with a breadth of scholarship has issued in a text that is astonishing in its insights and practical applicability. A must-read for pastors and pastoral educators.”

**—Paul Barnett, lecturer emeritus, Moore Theological College**

“In this carefully researched book, Scott Goode convincingly demonstrates that Paul thought ordinary believers could, and should, be agents of God’s saving work in their relationships with outsiders, insiders, and those on the fence. In their particular contexts, they are to imitate Paul and, ultimately, Christ himself. *Salvific Intentionality in 1 Corinthians* is a highly important contribution to both Pauline studies and contemporary church life.”

**—Michael J. Gorman, professor of biblical studies and theology, St. Mary’s Seminary & University**

“Scott Goode’s fresh look at 1 Corinthians offers new insights into the ‘untidy’ social and familial worlds inhabited by Paul’s congregations. *Salvific Intentionality in 1 Corinthians* presents a convincing case that, in a complex world of insiders/outside, believers should adopt a missional posture emphasizing salvific possibilities. Pastors and teachers will benefit from Goode’s emphasis on churches today imagining themselves as missional communities.”

**—Lynn Cohick, distinguished professor of New Testament, Houston Christian University**

“This book makes an original contribution to the interpretation of 1 Corinthians. It composes a creative, cogent, and compelling case for Scott Goode’s conviction that, in various ways and by various means, Paul cultivated the ‘missional imagination’ of Corinthian Christ-followers.”

**—David J. Neville, lecturer in New Testament studies, St. Mark’s National Theological Centre**

