

Paul's Use of Diatribe

Paul uses a rhetorical style called a diatribe, which in ancient Greco-Roman terms means a lively Q&A dialogue with an imaginary opponent or objector, rather than an angry rant.

Key Examples in Paul's Letters

- **Romans 3:1-8:** Paul asks, "*What advantage then has the Jew?*" and stages a back-and-forth dialogue with an objector who questions God's faithfulness and proposes a false idea that doing evil brings good.
- **Romans 6:1-2:** Paul poses the hypothetical question, "*Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?*" then immediately refutes it with the famous phrase, "*God forbid!*" (or "*May it never be!*").
- **Romans 9:14:** He asks, "*Is there unrighteousness with God?*" responding again with "*God forbid!*" to correct a critic's wrong assumption.
- **1 Corinthians 15:35-36:** Anticipating a skeptic questioning the physical resurrection, Paul writes, "*But someone will say, 'How are the dead raised up?'*" and answers them by addressing the objector directly as "*Foolish one!*"

Elements of Paul's Diatribe Style

- **Rhetorical questions:** Raising potential misunderstandings.
- **Imaginary objectors:** Introducing opposing voices using phrases like "*But someone will say*".
- **Emphatic denials:** Using sharp refutations like *mē genoito* ("May it never be!") to dismantle false views.