



# Paul

## On a Mission from God

### Week 4

### Paul's Spirituality

Michael Gorman's book, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, has been very helpful in the development of this class.

## Paul's mission field





## **What do we mean by “spirituality?”**

- ❖ Believers do not mean what much of the American pop/media culture means by “spirituality.”
  - This is not about finding the divine within or getting in tune with some sort of all-encompassing force or a feeling of interconnectedness.
- ❖ Christian *spirituality* simply means life in the Spirit. It is the “lived experience” of believers, all of whom are indwelt by God’s Holy Spirit.
  - For Paul, it is being part of a Spirit-filled community in covenant relationship with God through the crucified and exalted Messiah, who is Lord.

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## **Paul’s Spirituality**

Covenantal  
Cruciform  
Charismatic  
Communal  
Countercultural  
(New) Creational

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## Covenantal

- ❖ God is merciful and faithful. (see Galatians 4:4-5; Romans 3:20-21)
  - God's mercy is demonstrated by God's willing gift of his son for *undeserving sinners*. God does not abandon his rebellious creation.
  - The same gift demonstrates God's faithfulness to his people, to his covenant promises, and to his creation. The OT story is one of God relentlessly pursuing his people, even as they are determined to run away.
- ❖ God is Trinitarian
  - The love of God is expressed in three persons who are one. (see 2 Cor. 13:13; Romans 5:1-11)
- ❖ God is cruciform
  - "Cruciform" means – crosslike. The cross of Christ is not only initiated by God, it *reveals* God. Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18-25). Thus, to understand God's love we must look to the cross.
- ❖ God is Father
  - Like Jesus, Paul calls God "Father" and *Abba*. For believers, God's fatherhood is experienced as adoption (Rom. 8:12-17; Gal. 4:4-7).

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## Cruciform

- ❖ A believer's life is to conform to Christ. His life is to be the shape our daily existence. "Cruciform" means in the shape of the cross. For Paul, this is more than following Christ's example.
- ❖ Paul uses the phrase "put on Christ."
  - We have done it (Gal. 3:27) and we are to do it (Romans 13:4). It is as if we are enveloped by Christ, surrounded by him.
- ❖ We are "in Christ/ in the Lord" (used very often) and Christ dwells in us (less often, see Galatians 2:19-20). Even here, Paul speaks of "already/not yet."
  - This mutual indwelling provides the context for all our being and doing. Being "in Christ" sums up Paul's whole life as a Christian. We are "in Christ" because we have been brought "into Christ." We are sustained in this by being with Christ.
  - We too are "dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, therefore do not let sin rule in your mortal body . . ." see (Romans 6:1-11).
  - We participate in Christ, most specifically, Christ crucified. Hence, the best synonym for love is sacrifice.

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## **Charismatic – life in Christ is life in the Spirit**

### **The Spirit as the Renewed Presence of God**

- ❖ This is key to understanding Paul and the NT
  - For Paul, God has returned to the temple. The Spirit is how God presently dwells in his holy temple.
  - Jeremiah 31:31-34 – The new covenant written on hearts, not the tablets of Moses
    - Compare to 2 Corinthians 3:1-6
  - Ezekiel 36-37; esp. 36:22-32 (see v. 27) – God will give his people a new heart and a new spirit
    - Compare to 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8
- ❖ The Spirit is the key to the new covenant as a fulfilled reality in the lives of God's people.
- ❖ The Spirit dwells in and among the people of God
  - Romans 8:9-11; Galatians 4:6; see 1 Cor 16-17 & 2 Cor 6:16

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## **The Church as God's Temple**

- ❖ Corinth – a tough city teeming with temples and temple prostitutes
- ❖ The Christian church in Corinth – a mess!
  - “Church” refers not to a building but to the people of God
  - There are probably no more than 150 Christians in Corinth meeting in house churches
- ❖ 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (“you” is plural here)
  - “Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.” (NRSV) [look also at v. 9, where Paul compares the church/people in Corinth to a building]
  - The church/people in Corinth is God's temple in Corinth – and God dwells in his temple – God's presence is his Spirit!
- ❖ See also 2 Corinthians 6:16-18

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## **The Individual Believer as God's Temple**

### ❖ 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- "Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body."
- "body" refers to the whole self

### ❖ 2 Corinthians 2:14-4:6

- This lengthy passage is about the ministers of the new covenant, who are unveiled as we enter the sanctuary to behold the glory of the Lord in the face of Jesus.

The Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of the promise that God himself would once again be present with his people. The Spirit indwells the people of God corporately and each individual believer.

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## **The Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23)**

### ❖ The fruit of the Spirit is contrasted with the "works of the Flesh." These lists are not meant to be exhaustive, but illustrative.

- Love – self-sacrificial giving of oneself for others
- Joy – delight in the Lord and the eternal life we've already tasted
- Peace – Paul is practical. He means the end of hostilities!
- Patience – forbearance; hanging in there
- Kindness – acts of mercy; the binding of wounds
- Generosity – doing good; uprightness of heart
- Faithfulness – heartfelt, utter trust in God's trustworthiness
- Gentleness – humility towards one's self and considerateness of others
- Self-control – life in moderation

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## Communal & Countercultural

- ❖ Richard Hays – “The church is a countercultural community of discipleship, and this community is the primary addressee of God’s imperatives.”
  - In Paul, in the NT, in the Bible – God is primarily speaking *to* his people, *as* a people about their corporate obedience. It is not first, “What shall *I* do?” but “What shall *we* do?”
- ❖ The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is the most complete portrait of God’s kingdom that we have. Jesus here is *not* speaking to the crowds but *only* to his disciples.
  - The purpose of Jesus’ teachings is to transform a community through whom God will transform the world. Jesus’ teachings are not transformative in and of themselves. It is the “second tablet” problem. Humankind’s problem is not ignorance, it is sin.
- ❖ If we do not feel the tension between what we want for ourselves and what God wants for us, then we are not listening to Paul or to Jesus.
  - Paul expected that God’s colonists would turn their lives upside down. Do we expect this of ourselves? Can we even acknowledge this expectation? Here’s a toughie -- does God want us to be rich? Look only in your New Testament!

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## (New) Creational

- ❖ Richard Hays again: “The church embodies the power of the resurrection in the midst of a not-yet-redeemed world.”
  - “New creation” is shorthand for the claim that God’s kingdom, his new creation (Isaiah 65:17), has come “already” but “not yet.” Paul expects the colonists to act like the people they already are!
  - “If anyone is in Christ – New Creation! – the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:17).
  - The church is the community of those upon “whom the ends of the ages have met” (1 Corinthians 10:11).
- ❖ There is a tension that we must acknowledge, feel, and live with.
  - Claiming either that we are waiting for the kingdom’s arrival or that the kingdom is fully present gets it wrong. Even in the midst of the world’s present suffering and sin, Paul claims that we have not only died with Christ, we have been raised with Christ. We are the new creations that God long-promised we would be, even as we “await the redemption of our bodies” (Romans 8:23).
  - If you try to pin Paul down on this you will inevitably misread him. It is the same sort of thing as claiming that Jesus is fully God and fully human. It is “both/and” not “either/or.”

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