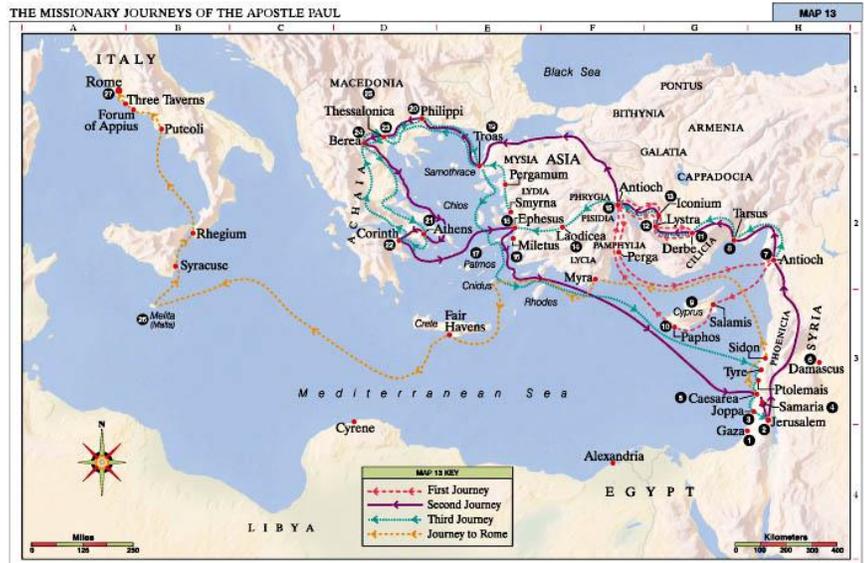




# PAULINE EPISTLES



**Apostle of the Crucified Lord, Michael Gorman, 2004** is the main book I studied along with notes and references in the New Jerusalem Bible and my own class notes.

Historical, literary, theological, and religious aspects of Paul's letters to be covered

1. Pay attention to small details and grand themes - the themes inform the details and the details create the themes. This is the "hermeneutical (interpretative) circle."
2. Six key words describe the frame of reference in which Paul is understood:
  - a. Jewish
  - b. Covenantal
  - c. Narrative - salvation history from promise to ultimate fulfillment (eschatological)
  - d. Countercultural
  - e. Trinitarian
  - f. Cruciform
3. Worked directly with Greek text; scriptural quotations come from New Revised Standard Version
4. Let's **engage Paul and his letters as the pastoral, spiritual, and theological challenge Paul intended his letters to be.** Our driving question is: **What does this letter urge the Church to believe, to hope for, and to do?**

## Chapter 1: Paul's Worlds

1. Greek-speaking (koine = common); born of Jewish parents of the tribe of Benjamin - a Pharisee of Second Temple Judaism; a Roman citizen under Caesar Augustus. Culture: Greek; Religion: Judaism; Political power: Romans.
2. Hellenization - most people of the time spoke, thought, and wrote in koine; Jews used Greek translation of Hebrew Scripture (Septuagint, LXX). Greek culture permeated the Mediterranean basin, but did not replace local customs - rather, Greek culture merged with each local community.
3. Mediterranean cultures defined themselves primarily in terms of group identity. **Monadic** = self is defined alone; emphasis is on the person. **Dyadic** = self is defined only in reference to another: family, religion, city/region, or group values. In dyadic cultures, emphasis is on inheriting and living by the norms and customs of the group; deviation from cultural norms would be disastrous for the person.
4. Culture of honor and shame. For Romans, the criteria were wealth, power, status, education, rhetorical skill, family/pedigree, political connections. For Jews, the criteria were tribe affiliation and religious observance. Peer pressure was the norm.
5. Hierarchy of Greco-Roman culture: small pinnacle of elite (the emperor and the governing class of senators, **equestrians** - high-ranking military, and **decurions** - aristocrats with land or wealth); small support sector of “retainers (political and religious leaders and merchants who kept the culture going); a massive foundation of the non-elite (day laborers, slaves, artisans, the unclean and degraded, and the “expendables” - widows, orphans, the disabled).
6. Jews participated to a certain extent in this hierarchy, but with a hierarchical culture of their own
  - a. In the Diaspora - merchants and artisans interacted with the elite and with Gentiles; very few, even the most educated, were “elite.”
  - b. In Palestine - a few Jews participated in ruling class, some were retainers, others were artisans and merchants, but most were poor.
  - c. Jews had their own concentric or horizontal hierarchy. Closest to the center were male religious of high standing (the Sanhedrin and the High Priest) - like the Holy of Holies in the center of the Temple; other Jewish males with some religious standing in the next closest court; women and children related to those males in the Court of Women; then the poor and disabled, widows, and orphans again one court removed; then the Court of the Gentiles, the furthest out from the Holy of Holies.
7. Inherent aspect of this hierarchical arrangement was patriarchy. Men had the power at whatever level, women, children, slaves were all subject to his authority, often considered as property. Elite women had more freedom than others and might receive an education. In Greco-Roman cultures, priestesses held important roles in the religious rites (some were temple prostitutes) and Greek and Roman goddesses were revered. In the **Diaspora**, Jewish women were active in their communities and sometimes synagogues as benefactors and leaders. Cults, especially **mystery religions**, primarily attracted women. **Merkabah** Judaism (“chariot” - referring to Ezekiel) was a

mystical form of Jewish spirituality; people had ecstatic experiences in dreams and visions, believing they had gone up to Heaven and encountered God or heavenly beings. This form of Judaism existed in the first century, as Paul attests in 2 COR 12:1-4.

8. Mediterranean culture had slaves, a person who belonged not to oneself but to another and who lived to do the other's bidding with no right of refusal. In urban areas, the majority of inhabitants were enslaved. Slaves had few (if any) rights; slavery was a debased state.
  - a. Slaves could be abused, tortured, and killed (in Imperial Rome, had to have a just reason for killing a slave).
  - b. Slaves could be made through conquest, piracy, or from children taken from the garbage dumps (those who had been "exposed"), or born into slavery (child of a slave automatically was enslaved).
  - c. Slaves could acquire skills and could rise to prominence (as pedagogues or as apprentices in master's business). A small number functioned as the empire's civil service, constituting the "imperial household."
  - d. Manumission, the freedom of slaves. Elites could release slaves to demonstrate the virtue of generosity; slaves could be liberated at the age of 30 (life expectancy was not much more than that). Slaves could pay for their freedom monetarily. Roman gods could force a "sacral manumission." Some slaves were emancipated when the master died, if the master included that in his will.
  - e. Freed slaves were called a "freedperson." They could travel freely but not vote. Often they became the clients of their former owners. Some became economically or politically successful; some failed and died in poverty. Some freedpersons became Roman citizens.

9. In Paul's time, the one overriding and unifying reality was the Roman Empire (from **27 BC** when Octavian defeated Marc Antony at the Battle of Actium and received from Roman Senate the name "Augustus" - revered one), thanks to Alexander the Great. Aspects of Paul's social, political, and religious worlds which affected his mission and message:
- a. Pax Romana - enforced by Roman army, taxes, and tributes - unified a huge land area of diverse ppl - similarity of government, military, art and architecture, aqueducts, paved roads
  - b. Community in the Empire - family was fundamental unit of Roman society, and the emperor was the *pater patriae* - the father of the country. Family/household in Greek: *oikos*; in Latin: *domus*.
  - c. Mobility in the Empire due to Roman roads and the Mediterranean Sea - had to be careful of robbers or pirates and inns with bad food, unsanitary conditions, and prostitutes
  - d. Imperial unity through cult and theology - the pagan cult of the emperor- word comes from the Latin *imperator*, meaning "commander." Julius Caesar called himself "imperator" and his successors took it as their *praenomen* - first name. Caesar's adopted son Octavian kept Caesar as his *cognomen* - last name. Octavian was hailed as "savior" and the "incarnation of divine good news for the whole world." He was also known as god and lord. Christians, of course, used these words to describe Jesus Christ and the Good News - *euangelion*.
  - e. *Res gestae divi Augusti* - things accomplished by the divine Augustus - Roman law, values, gods, roads, and coins.
  - f. Dark side to Roman Empire: as the Empire was born, republics died. The army had to enforce the pax romana, using conquest, subjugation, humiliation, taxes, tributes, punishments: *peace through war*: invasion, exile, enslavement, crucifixion (only for non-citizens - this is why Paul was beheaded, not crucified.) Nothing could be more un-Roman than to *honor and deify* a man crucified by the Romans.
  - g. Many families lived in cities. Some cities were also colonies if they had special obligations and duties to the emperor. Within the cities, everyone was aware of the socioeconomic differences between citizens and non-citizens; slaves, free, and freedpersons; poor and wealthy. Love of honor or status (Latin: *philotimia*) created a fiercely competitive society to accrue honor and respect for themselves, their city, and/or the emperor. No middle class existed.
  - h. Working class had little status but formed their own *collegia* - clubs with religious overtones, trade guilds, or the burial society to defray the high cost of burials.
  - i. There was a system of patron-client whereby ppl of means acted for the benefit of those with lesser means, starting with the emperor.
  - j. Throughout the Empire, there was a diversity of peoples, cultures, religions, geographical landscapes, and political structures. Cult of the Emperor unified the Empire and permeated the culture - it was a *theopolitical* allegiance, serving to unite people as a **social outing, religious belief, and political statement**. Cult of the Emperor was one of the most **fundamental cohesive elements in the Empire**. It was a continuation of the Hellenistic ruler cult. For Rome, it was a significant change from the Roman Republic, and some Roman citizens resisted it. It was defended as "only a god could subdue such a

- large Empire, such a large part of the world.” Emperor was the *pontifex maximus* - the main bridge-builder, the chief priest with incense burned at altars in temples dedicated to the Emperor. Imperial cult was political, social, religious, human, and divine - and compulsory. The Jews were exempt because their religion pre-dated the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire.
- k. Theology of Imperial cult: Rome was the gods’ choice to rule the world, obviously, from the string of victories and the “peace.” The divine Emperor was patron, protector, father, and the epitome of Roman power, peace, and security: the savior (*soter*) who brought the *euangelion*, the Good News of salvation to the world since his *epiphanein*, his appearance.
  - l. This cult spread during the first half of the first century throughout Greece and Asia Minor: Pisidia, Antioch, Corinth, and Philippi. Herod the Great had built and dedicated two cities to the Emperor: *Caesarea Maritima and Sebaste (Samaria)*, three temples for the imperial cult, and numerous statues of the Emperor. He dedicated games to Augustus, even in Jerusalem. These temples were often the largest and most central sanctuaries in a city. Coins now bore the images of Greek or Roman gods **and the Emperor** (Render unto Caesar...)
10. Paul lived in early or Second Temple Judaism (First Temple, built by Solomon, destroyed in 587 BC; rebuilt by the returning exiles under Cyrus [538 BC] - Nehemiah and Ezra - and greatly expanded by Herod the Great in 20 BC; destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.) There were a variety of groups within Judaism (Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, Zealots, Diasporian Jews, mystics, and God-fearers), but they were united in:
- a. Monotheism
  - b. Covenant (election)
  - c. Land
  - d. Moses
  - e. The Law (Torah) - love, obedience, and faithfulness to God and love/justice for others
  - f. Temple and synagogue (not the Essenes)
  - g. Circumcision
  - h. Hope for the Messiah when subjugation and suffering would cease
  - i. Subjugation to Rome
  - j. Boundary markers: Circumcision, food laws, calendar (feasts and holy days)
11. Jewish unity in diversity: theological development which affected many Jews (mysticism or apocalypticism) and the different Jewish groups/schools/parties
12. Subjugation to foreign power - Rome, in Paul’s day - some Jews collaborated with them or worked for them (Herod, tax collectors) - some accepted the domination - some fought it (the zealots) like the Maccabees of 167-164 BC. Full-scale rebellion in AD 66-74 to cast the Romans out of Palestine - Rome besieged them; the ppl starved, ate their own children. Rome destroyed the Temple AD 70 and Jews committed mass suicide in the citadel of Masada rather than be subject to Roman rule (AD 74). Some thought their revolutionary activity would hasten the coming of the Messiah, as if we can force God’s hand - and they did not recognize the Messiah

who had come. ***No Jew expected a suffering Messiah*** who would be crucified and would rise from the dead.

13. Jews - the Chosen People - to be holy meant to be set apart for God's purposes, to be obedient to God's commandments. First century Judaism: covenantal nomism (keeping of the Law as a way of staying in the covenant). Recent perspectives: (1) Observant Jews kept the commandments in gratitude for being the Chosen People. (2) Paul's criticism of Judaism and Judaizers was its cultural imperialism or ethnic pride.

14. Boundary markers functioned as ritual signs of their covenant with God and often cannot be separated from the substantive religious and ethical distinctives of their covenant with God.
- a. **Ritual boundary markers** - circumcision, calendar, and dietary laws - with righteousness as aim - often repelled Gentiles
  - b. **Religious/ethical (religio-ethical) boundary markers** - monotheism and morality - Jews worshipped one God exclusively and abstained from the imperial cult and did not participate in Greco-Roman cultural behaviors (exposing children, throwing infants on garbage dump, adultery). These markers often attracted Gentiles. These became “God-fearers” - those who admired Judaism’s religio-ethical markers but did not undergo the ritual markers. These God-fearers would have been attracted to Paul’s circumcision-free monotheistic moral Gospel. In Romans 2-3, Paul opines that the Jews maintained the ritual boundary markers but had caved into the pagan culture and transgressed the religio-ethical markers.
15. Essenes in the Qumran community - Dead Sea Scrolls - Second Temple not true Temple - no Divine Fire - did not participate in Temple worship - believed in ritual baths (*mikvah*) - and with the Pharisees, believed in Revelation (apocalypse) - worldview of the meaning and goal of history as a cosmic battle between God and the forces of evil, communicated through dreams and visions (Daniel 7-12, Revelation, and Mark 13). Two types of revelation: **historical/horizontal** - revealing future events: judgment and salvation) and **cosmic/vertical** - revealing present heavenly reality (visions or trips). These two can be mixed together. Paul claims to have made trips to Heaven and had an apocalyptic view of history. Revelations give hope to people who are suffering with no end in sight in this world - a new Heaven and a new Earth; a day of judgment and salvation. Two kinds of unseen realities: **vertical or spatial** dimension and **horizontal, eschatological, temporal** dimension, giving a foretaste of the future and a means to endure **and engage** the present. Apocalypticism - multifaceted dualism, belief in strong pairs of opposites, characterized by cosmic, chronological, and ethical dualism.
- a. **Cosmic dualism** - the cosmos is a battleground between good and evil. Participants include angels, demons, and people who side with either God or the devil. God will ultimately defeat evil.
  - b. **Chronological dualism** - history is divided into (1) the present age and (2) the age to come. The present age is beleaguered by evil, injustice, and oppression. The age to come is blessed with righteousness, justice, freedom, and peace. A spectacular Divine intervention will usher in the age to come. - No hope of humans acting in history to resolve the crisis. Apocalypticism is both optimistic in the eventual victory of God but pessimistic in the view of the present age.
  - c. **Ethical dualism** - good and evil, God and Satan - no moral gray areas, only black and white, sheep and goats, weeds and wheat.
16. Apocalyptic mindset expressed in Ezekiel, Zechariah, Daniel and some non-canonical books (1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch). Also in Dead Sea Scrolls, early Christian literature, and some Pauline epistles. It is important to understand the apocalyptic to appreciate the New Testament.

## 17. Jewish schools/groups:

- a. Sadducees - priestly aristocracy - focused on the Torah, denied angels, resurrection
- b. Pharisees - non-priestly group zealously dedicated to the protection and promotion of the Law and the purity of Israel. They were experts on the written Law but also believed in oral tradition. They developed a way of interpreting Scripture called *midrash* - applying ancient texts to modern situations. They affirmed the resurrection and the existence of angelic beings and spiritual powers. They embodied an apocalyptic and nationalistic perspective.
- c. Essenes - apocalyptic, nationalistic, committed to purity. Some lived in the wilderness, such as the Qumran community. Some lived in the city and gathered to interpret and observe Scripture together. Considered themselves to be a pure remnant preparing for God's final battle. Anonymous founder called "Teacher of Righteousness." They awaited *two messiahs*: one priestly and one royal (a military victor and a prophet). Their method of scriptural interpretation was called *peshet*, based on the assumption that Scripture was fulfilled in the present experiences of their community as the true Israel.
- d. Zealots - radical theopolitical movement for Jewish liberation from the Romans. Heroes: Phineas the priest who impaled the adulterers; the prophet Elijah; the Maccabees. They were prepared to take their religious zeal to the point of violent revolt.
- e. Jews in the Diaspora - established synagogues in the absence of the Temple; distinguished themselves with ritual and religio-ethical boundary markers. They were exempted from military service and the imperial cult since their religion pre-dated the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire. While the Gentiles tolerated these Jews, they sometimes persecuted them. There was tension between assimilation into the community and separation to maintain their religious identity. Jews existed within a range of antagonism and accommodation. Some were interested in Hellenic intellectual values and philosophies. Philo of Alexandria (died AD 50) was known for his allegorical approach to Judaism - he blended Jewish tradition and classical philosophy.
- f. Mystics - *Merkabah* Judaism - meaning "chariot" referring to Ezekiel's chariot of fire - mystical Jewish spirituality like charismatic Christians - ecstatic experiences (dreams, visions, trances, trips to Heaven where they encountered God or angelic beings and powers). Paul speaks of this strain of Judaism in 2 COR 12:1-4.
- g. God-fearers - Gentile converts attracted to the monotheism and morality of the Jews who did not subscribe to the ritual boundary markers.

18. Paul's missionary journeys took him to Italy, Greece, Anatolia (the "land of the East," Asia Minor - modern-day Turkey) - lands with many gods and many lords - polytheistic and pagan. Greek and Roman deities, Egyptian gods, local deities, gods of "mystery religions," and sometimes shrines to the God of Israel. Large temples in the cities; shrines in the countryside. Hierarchy of gods - Jupiter/Zeus at the top, older gods higher than the newer ones. Most people could be devoted to many gods (except Jews and Christians). Identities of several gods could be merged - syncretism within the empire, for accommodating the local gods facilitated subjugating the people. Monotheists were intolerant in this regard.

19. Common rituals: prayer, sacrifice, meals, processions, festivals, contests (athletic, artistic, rhetorical). Nearly every public event had religious dimension or undertones. The entire culture was inherently religious. From the gods, people wanted peace and prosperity, health and long life, guidance and protection. The gods were given sacrifices but made no moral demands upon the people. The relationship was *contractual*, focused on *ritual*. Jews and Christians focused on *covenant and morality*. Mystery cults promised access to secret knowledge (gnostics, anyone?) and rebirth, salvation, or immortality through an initiation rite which involved a sacral meal. Most people were more concerned with surviving the struggle of life rather than living forever. Most pagans did not believe in an afterlife. People used astrology and magic to escape their enslavement to the forces of nature.
20. Philosophical schools
- Cynics (literally, dogs - the name they were disparagingly given) - a radical countercultural group known for frugality, inattention to clothing and bodily care and comfort, brash speech, begging, public sex. Used a confrontational style of preaching the pursuit of freedom. Influenced the Stoics.
  - Epicureans - pleasure: virtue known through the senses - was the goal of human life. They downplayed the existence of gods, denied immortality, fought superstition. Epicureans influenced the people of Corinth.
  - Platonists - the body is the tomb of the soul and was therefore unimportant (gnostics again)
  - Stoics - the universe is permeated by Reason, *Logos*, identified with God (or Zeus). A spark of this Reason is within each person, constituting the “true self.” The goal of life: to live in harmony with Reason and be unaffected by life. *Apatheia* - indifference to physical pleasure or difficulty - things that cannot affect the true self. Self-sufficiency and contentment are virtues. Philosopher Zeno (333-264 BC) founded it. By the first century, emphasis on ethics. Influenced Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Aurelius.
21. Some of Paul’s converts would have come from these schools of thought and could have influenced how Paul presented the Gospel (how and to what extent?) ***Paul spent most of his time in cities***, especially major cities, so the spread of the Gospel far and wide was facilitated. He was an “urban missionary.”
22. Cities Paul visited - some were ancient, dating back to classical or Hellenistic times, when the roads, temples, and other buildings were built. Some cities had been devastated by war and had been rebuilt as colonies, like Corinth and Philippi. These cities were the religious and commercial hub of the region, providing regular and rapid exchange of goods and ideas, and were significant trade routes.
- Large cities Paul visited: Rome, Ephesus, Pisidian Antioch, Thessalonica, Athens
  - Modest cities Paul visited: Philippi, Colossae

23. Most of these cities were built around a buttelike natural formation, a “high city” - *acropolis* - visible for miles (a city built on a hill cannot be hidden). Features of these cities:
- a. Large temple to the chief god or goddess, temple to the emperor
  - b. *Agora* - marketplace
  - c. Colonnades - covered outdoor sidewalks
  - d. Temples and shrines - temple of Artemis at Ephesus one of the world’s seven wonders
  - e. Restaurants
  - f. Synagogues - sometimes Jews met in houses
  - g. Shops
  - h. Public buildings, such as public baths
  - i. Basilicas - for municipal or provincial activities
  - j. *Bouleuterion* - a small, semi-circular theater for meetings of city officials
  - k. *Bema* - a bench in the agora for official public announcements and public hearings - like the judgment seat upon which Pilate sat?
  - l. Fountains and monuments dedicated to the emperor or to gods or goddesses
  - m. Theaters and arenas often built into a natural structure for acoustics - athletic contests, religious and political ceremonies, music. *Ampitheaters* were more common in the western part of the Empire. The *circus* was elliptical and used for races. The *odeion* was used exclusively for music. *Arenas* were used for gladiator fights.
  - n. Baths - hot, warm, and cold water baths; sometimes saunas. Some single-sex, some open to both sexes.
  - o. Residences - small homes or apartments (*insulae*)
24. The churches Paul founded met in homes or small apartments
- a. Triclinium - room for three couches
  - b. Atrium - reception room
  - c. Open interior courtyard
  - d. House size varied from accommodating a dozen people to several hundred
25. City neighborhoods were organized according to ethnicity or trade. The elite and the rich lived either in the main part of the city or out in the countryside. Poorer people lived atop one another in the *insulae* in very close quarters. Everybody knew everyone else. Troublemakers could be subdued with mob violence or ostracism. Word spread quickly, so the Good News spread rapidly among the non-elites, creating Christian communities.