



## PAULINE EPISTLES

### Paul's Gospel The Good News of Christ Crucified and Raised

1. ***Euangelion*** - Gospel, Good News - of salvation - efficacious utterance of God, His Word
2. Content of Paul's Gospel
  - a. Summary statements
  - b. Larger story these statements embody and infer
  - c. Theopolitical character of the Pauline Gospel
  - d. Benefits of the Gospel for those who respond to it in faith
3. **Crucial to Pauline Gospel: Christ crucified** - implies Resurrection, but Suffering Servant uppermost. The Cross is the signature of the One risen. All of salvation history is to be interpreted through the lens of the Cross. The Resurrections makes that perspective **possible and necessary**.
4. Gospel in Creed and Hymn
  - a. Paul attests that the source of the Gospel is God alone
  - b. Paul often cites creeds, hymns, confessions of faith from the early Church
    - i. Affirms these items
    - ii. Creatively re-purposes them for his Gospel
    - iii. Pre-Pauline fragments: God promised beforehand; Jesus was descended from David; was declared as Son of God; rose from the dead; we are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption of Jesus, whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by His Blood; Jesus was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification; God did not withhold His own Son, but gave Him up for all of us; confess that Jesus is Lord and believe that He rose from the dead, you will be saved; No one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit; Jesus gave Himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil; Jesus loved me and gave Himself for me; when the fullness of time had come, God sent His Son...so that we might receive adoption as children; being in human form, He became obedient to death on a Cross; you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God to wait for His Son whom He raised from the dead; Jesus rescues us from the coming wrath.

- c. Basic Pauline Gospel:
    - i. Divine Promise was issued through the prophets
    - ii. Jesus fulfilled that Divine Promise
    - iii. Jesus has messianic and royal status as Son of God and Son of David
    - iv. Jesus' death by crucifixion is both God's gracious gift and Jesus' self-giving
    - v. God raised Jesus from the dead, making Jesus Lord (*kyrios*)
    - vi. Jesus will return for a day of judgment - salvation or wrath
    - vii. Human response is required: faith, confession of Jesus as Lord, service to God
    - viii. Effects of Jesus' Paschal Mystery: outpouring of the Spirit; forgiveness of sins; liberation from sin and from the present evil age; justification; redemption; deliverance from the coming wrath.
  - d. Traditional and/or liturgical character of Pauline epistles (1 COR 15:3-8) - four chief affirmations or articles - creedal statements:
    - i. Christ the Messiah died - for our sins; according to the Scriptures
    - ii. He was buried
    - iii. He was raised - on the third day; according to the Scriptures
    - iv. He appeared - to Cephas, then to the Twelve; to more than 500 brothers at one time; to James, then to all the Apostles; last of all, also to me.
  - e. All of these are not theological or philosophical assertions but **narrative statements**. Paul's Gospel has twofold character: it is good news **about God** and His Messiah and is therefore good news **for us**. Therefore, the theological and soteriological (salvific) dimensions of Paul's Gospel are inseparable. We must participate in the Good News to benefit from it - we must bear our own cross and unite it with His; we must die with Him to rise again with Him. We must live with Him in this age to live with Him forever. We must conform ourselves to Christ as we partake of His Divine Nature. **Divine initiative requires our human response in faith.**
5. By confessing that Jesus is Lord, the entire Gospel is confessed - for Jesus, the crucified Messiah, was raised from the dead and is Lord; He rightly shares in the honor due the One True God of Israel. This is portrayed most graphically in Philippians 2:6-11, which is possibly a fragment of a Christian hymn - a creed sung in worship - the drama of the Paschal Mystery in two acts: **humiliation and exaltation**.
  6. At the end of Philippians 2:6-11, Paul borrows from Isa 45:23: "To Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." Paul interprets Israel's *SHEMA* as an affirmation of One God, the Father and One Lord Jesus: Deut. 6:4 - Hear, oh, Israel, the Lord (*kyrios*) our God, the Lord (*kyrios*) alone.
  7. 1 COR 8:4-6: One God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.
  8. 2 COR 5:19 - in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself.

9. Philippians 2 allusions to important figures:
  - a. Adam, with whom Christ is contrasted
  - b. Suffering Servant of Isaiah, to whom Christ is compared
  - c. To the imperial cult, as a contrast and challenge to the misplaced honor given to the emperor rather than to the universal *kyrios*, Lord Jesus Christ
  - d. Is narrative: theological and christological, but **not soteriological** - does not mention the salvific effect of Christ's sacrifice and **not ethical** - as an example - but Paul uses this text **ethically** as he sees his own ministry and the life of believers as recapitulating "**the Christ event**" - Jesus' coming, death, and exaltation.
  - e. Paul presents in this narrative a story of obedient **faith**, self-giving **love**, and unwavering **hope**, even in the face of suffering and death. He therefore presents the source of salvation and its shape as participation in the Christ event. Jesus' story is the Church's story, and is the story of each believer. This text is Paul's **master story**, telling his Gospel most fully and succinctly. A shortened version is found in 2 COR 8:9.
10. Paul's Gospel is salvation history told within God's covenantal relationship with Israel, that Jesus was the fulfillment of God's Promises and the ultimate fruition of all of the covenants: **new exodus, new covenant, new heart, and new creation** all came to pass in Jesus. God is always faithful and is saving Israel and all mankind, even as Israel's prophets foretold. Isa 52:10: all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God - points to the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's Kingdom. God's name is a political term: Lord (*kyrios*), as the union of religious and political realms was natural for Jews. For Paul, a theopolitical Gospel was natural. Was his co-opting of political terms from the Greco-Roman world a deliberate slap in the face, a challenge to Caesar?
  - a. **Euangelion** - Good News - in Roman terms meant that Caesar had won a battle or to the onset of an Emperor's rule
  - b. **Kyrios** - meaning Lord - connoted a powerful political figure - an imperial title
  - c. **Ephphanein** - epiphany of Caesar - his appearance on the scene to usher in the Pax Romana
  - d. **Soter** - salvation - military victory
  - e. **Eirene** - peace - Pax Romana
  - f. **Pistis** - faith - loyalty between Rome and its citizens (Latin **fides**)
  - g. **Eleutheria** - freedom - political autonomy
  - h. **Dikaïos** - justice, righteousness - Roman justice
  - i. **Ekklesia** - church - local assembly of citizens in a city (**polis**) or the meeting of a club (**collegium**)
  - j. **Parousia** - Second Coming - imperial or other official arrival, visit, presence
11. Jesus preached the coming of the reign of God; Paul preached the Lordship of the Crucified, whose reign would be definitive, a new creation, where all would be judged and either participate or be excluded forever. The Good News summons a response: acceptance or rejection.
  - a. As a religious event: Divine intervention was a summons to know God anew
  - b. As a political event: acknowledgment of Jesus as Lord in continuity with Israel's prophets and in contrast to the Emperor
  - c. As a cosmic event: Divine intervention is apocalyptic which inaugurated the age to come, the Final Days.

12. Paul's Gospel is personal - it invites a personal response, a personal commitment to conform to the Crucified - but it is not **private** - it is meant for all people of all times. Two key themes: justification and salvation - meant at an individual level but also as we experience them with others. The Good News is good because (a) God is good and (b) we are saved by God's gracious gift. Polyvalent experiences of grace include these benefits:
- a. Justification - to be in right covenantal relationship with God here and now with the expectation in hope that we will be acquitted by God on the day of judgment. **Jesus is our righteousness.**
  - b. Reconciliation and peace - God has taken the initiative to repair our relationship. We must respond by cooperating with His grace and reaching out to Him to continually reconcile with Him. **Jesus is our mediator and our peace.**
  - c. Forgiveness - sins and trespasses against God require atonement. **Jesus is our sacrifice.**
  - d. Redemption or liberation - the human condition is one of bondage to sin and concupiscence and to the evil forces around us. Through Christ, we are liberated, redeemed from slavery to sin to become "slaves" of God. **Jesus is our liberation and our freedom.**
  - e. Present Resurrection - Paul clearly affirms that believers participate in Christ's Resurrection by being raised to new life. This new life conforms us to Christ's Cross. **Jesus is our life.**
  - f. Incorporation into the People of God - Christians constitute the covenant People of God - calling us Body of Christ, new creation, temple of the Holy Spirit. **Jesus is our community.**
  - g. Gift(s) of the Holy Spirit - affirms the personal Presence of God in the Christian assembly. The Spirit makes known and empowers a life of faith, hope, and love. **Jesus is our power.**
  - h. Certainty of God's love - Jesus Christ is proof positive of God's love for us - **Divine Agape.**
  - i. Sanctification - Jesus enables Christians to embody the holy, distinctive, countercultural life appropriate for People of the Covenant. **Jesus is our salvation.**
  - j. Deliverance from wrath - accountability on the day of judgment. Divine wrath is the fate of unbelievers and the disobedient. God's love manifested in the death and Resurrection of Jesus insures protection from this coming wrath. **Jesus is our security.**
  - k. Salvation - specifically, the future experience of God's grace and glory resulting from justification. Salvation includes bodily resurrection, glorification, and eternal life. **Jesus is our salvation.**
  - l. Bodily resurrection and eternal life: Paul's Pharisaic view that human life is embodied spirit both in this life (before physical death) and in the next (at the general resurrection). This hope of Christians is a transformed bodily existence in God's Presence. **Jesus is our hope.**
  - m. Glorification: In this life, Christians begin to transform into the likeness of Jesus, the Image of God, which will be completed in the life to come. **Jesus is our goal, our telos.**
13. To experience these benefits in their fullness requires an acknowledgment of the totality of God's claims on humanity in Christ - God's grace is salvation for Israel and for all the nations. These benefits are experienced in community within the Church which Jesus founded.
14. Each benefit is:
- a. Ultimately derived from God's grace manifested in Jesus
  - b. Centered in the Cross
  - c. Confirmed by the Resurrection
  - d. Made effective by the Spirit
  - e. Experienced in community

**15.** The Gospel is Trinitarian; Christians enter into a relationship with the Holy Trinity.