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 **The Iona School for Ministry**

# Paul and Deutero-Pauline Letters

 First Year

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**Class Description**

An overview study of the letters of Paul and a few Deutero-Pauline texts in the New Testament. Students engage Paul’s major pastoral strategies, theological themes, and moral foundations. Students consider how the diverse social contexts and issues of particular church communities shape Paul’s rhetorical strategy in each situation.

 **Class Objectives**

After taking this class, students will:

1. Explain, teach, and preach Paul’s revelatory, transformative experience of the risen Christ that reoriented his Jewish life; informed his mission and ministry among the Gentiles; and shapes faithful discipleship then and now.
2. Explain, teach, and preach Paul’s “apocalyptic” perspective that informs his interpretation of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
3. Explain, teach, preach, and reason with Paul’s “logic of the cross” in the context of contemporary issues in daily life.
4. Explain, teach, and preach Paul’s pastoral theology that grounds Christian faith, practice, and hope in the earthly manifestations of God’s life-giving power that raised Jesus from the dead.
5. Explain, teach, preach, and implement Paul’s strategies for building local Christian communities through practices of Christian formation that include baptism, spiritual discernment, and transformative conversation.

# Study Guide

## Read in the following order: portions of the Pauline corpus in the NOAB NT, including Galatians 1:1-2:20; 3:21-29; 5:16-26; 6:1-18; (compare Galatians 1-2 with Acts 9:1-9); Philippians 1:1-4:23; First Corinthians chapters 1:1-4:21; 8, 9, 11:17-34; 12-15; Romans 1:1-17; chapters 3; 6; 8; 12:1-15:13; Second Corinthians 5:16-610; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-5:28; Colossians 1:15-20; 3:1-4:1; Ephesians chapter 2; deSilva, pp. 409-648.

## As you read, make some general notes on the following:

1. What are the main reasons Paul the Pharisee would initially oppose the Jesus movement? How do you think this influenced his later engagement with the followers of Jesus who continued to demand that Gentiles become Jewish converts to be part of the Jesus movement?
2. What does Paul establish as the basis for his authority as an apostle in Galatians? in First Corinthians? Why do you think he is always having to defend his status as an apostle? In what ways do modern readers sometimes misunderstand Paul’s defense of his status as an apostle? How might you as a teacher/preacher help correct this misunderstanding?
3. What differences do you see between Paul’s characterization of his encounter with the risen Christ (Galatians 1:11-24; 2:20) and the way it is presented in Acts (9:1-9)? What historical factors might account for these differences?
4. According to another biblical scholar, “For Paul, the death of Jesus was a sacrifice in behalf of others: His death on the cross liberates all who turn to him in faith from obligations to the law that they did not and could not discharge.” Now read Phil 3:2-10. Does Paul sound like a Pharisaic Jew who does not think the requirements of the law are capable of being discharged? How might your understanding of Paul change if the Greek word *pistis* (translated as “faith” in all Bibles) means BOTH faith as trust and confidence, AND faithfulness in one’s active response to that trust and confidence? If Paul is no longer insisting that Gentiles abide by the Jewish Law, does that mean Paul has no behavioral expectations for Gentile followers of Jesus?
5. Now re-read Philippians 2:1-13. How does Paul characterize his behavioral expectations for the Gentile followers of Jesus in this church? Does he give them concrete details about how to live out this pattern?
6. Now re-read Romans 1:16-17. According to Paul, where is the power of God being revealed in the world? How might the understanding of “faith/faithfulness” mentioned above influence how you understand this theme? How might Paul’s own encounter with the risen Christ (Gal 1:11-24) shape what he says here in Romans?
7. Re-read First Corinthians 4:8-13 and Second Corinthians 5:16-6:10. What role does suffering play in Paul’s ministry? Why?
8. Many interpreters argue that “justification” is central to Paul’s theology. To be “justified” means to be in right relationship with God and with other human beings. Paul only addresses this theme in Galatians and Romans. Thinking as historians, can you hypothesize why this might be the case only in these two letters? Do you think that this theme is “central” to Paul if it only appears in two letters?
9. Re-read First Corinthians 1:10-2:16. How does Paul’s characterization of the “*logos* (logic) of the cross” in 1:17-18 fit with his understanding of the story of Jesus’ death and resurrection in Phil 2:1-11? What do you think he means in 1 Corinthians 2:2 when says “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (see also Galatians 3:1)? How do you think Paul’s portrayal of Christ crucified relates to the “demonstration of Spirit and power” the Corinthians experienced (1 Corinthians 2:4)? In what/whom does Paul want the Corinthians to put their faith/trust/confidence (1 Corinthians 2:5)? Does this surprise you? How might this relate to Paul’s own experience of the risen Christ?
10. Be able to explain how 1 Corinthians 8, 9, and 11:17-34 reflect Paul’s application of the “logic of the cross” to particular situations in Corinth.
11. According to Romans 6:1-11, baptism into Christ means dying with Christ and being buried with him. Does Paul also say here that baptism means being raised with Christ? What does Paul mean by “walking in newness of life”? Compare Ephesians 2:6.
12. Re-read Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. What do you think Paul means when he talks about being “led by the Spirit” in Galatians and Romans? Can you explain how this is Paul’s moral *alternative* to following the Jewish Law? Does 1 Corinthians 12:4-7 add anything to your understanding of what Anglican’s might call Paul’s “moral theology” or “ethics”?
13. Re-read Romans 12:1-8. From what Paul says here, can you determine how Christians go about discerning the will of God? Now re-read Philippians 2:1-13. What do you think Paul means when he tells the church in Philippians 2:12 “y’all work out your y’all’s own salvation [each “you” is plural] with fear and trembling”? What do you think this practice looks like in Paul’s Christian communities?
14. Re-read 1 Corinthians 11-14. How do these chapters reflect the specific norms, rituals, and practices in the church at Corinth?
15. Is there a theological/ethical difference between having “faith *in* Christ” and being justified/having life through “the faith/faithfulness *of* Chr