

# ST. PAUL: APOSTLE TO THE WORLD

with Dr. Geoffrey Lentz  
Syllabus

**DATES:** Wednesday Nights, August 17–October 5, from 6:00–7:00pm in Wesley Abbey

**TEXT:** Acts, Galatians, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, Romans, and other selected Epistles  
(Recommended Translations: NRSV or NIV, but *the best translation is the one that you read!*)

**OBJECTIVE:** We will get a better understanding of the life, times, and message of St. Paul. No one other than Jesus has made such an impact on the church. Yet, Paul remains surrounded by controversy. We will study his life from start to finish focusing on his conversion and his mission. Along the way, we will answer some difficult questions including: what did Paul think about women? What did he believe about the end-times? And how do grace and good works go together? We will be studying the Acts of the Apostles and reading selections of his Epistles better understand the life and times of this world-changing man.

## **SCHEDULE:**

### **Week 1. Wednesday, August 17—A Damascus Road Experience: Paul's Conversion**

Readings: Acts 7:57–8:3, Acts 22:3-5, Philippians 3:4–6, Galatians 1:13-17, 1 Corinthians 15:3–8, 2 Corinthians 12:1-7, Acts 9, Acts 22:6-21, Acts 26:12-18

We will learn who Saul of Tarsus was, his training as a Pharisee, and his role in persecuting the church. We contemplate what happened on the Damascus Road and find that it is not the conversion that we imagined—instead of joining a new religion, Paul had an experience of the risen Jesus Christ.

### **Week 2. Wednesday, August 24—An Untimely Apostle: Paul's Mission and Vision**

Readings: Journey 1: Acts 13-14, Journey 2: Acts 15:36--18:22, Journey 3: Acts 18:23--21:14, Journey 4?: Romans 15:28

Paul while not one of Jesus' twelve disciples was called to be an Apostle—a sent one. He his best known for his missionary journeys that brought the Gospel to the world. We will learn why Paul felt this calling and seek to get his vision for the world.

### **Week 3. Wednesday, August 31—*Shema!* Unity, Reconciliation, and Peace**

Readings: Galatians 3:28, Ephesians 2:11-22, 1 Corinthians 1:10-12, 1 Corinthians 3:1-11, 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, Colossians 1:15-20

One of Paul's major themes of ministry is unity. He believed that Jesus and the Spirit were the one God of Israel. Because God was one and yet diverse, the church could be united in differences, whether Jew or Gentile, slave or free, or male or female. His mission was to keep the church structurally and relationally united despite the major cultural differences present in the Roman Empire.

### **Week 4. Wednesday, September 7—Silent in Church? Women, Slaves, and Social Ethics**

Readings: 1 Corinthians 14:33–35, 1 Timothy 2: 9-15, 1 Corinthians 11:5, Acts 16:1-2, 1 Timothy 3:8-13, Romans 16:7, 1 Corinthians 1:11, Philippians 4: 2–3, Galatians 3:28

Paul is often thought of as being unkind or unjust to women. We will learn how to interpret some of those difficult texts and see Paul's true belief about women, slaves, and others oppressed by society.

## **Week 5. Wednesday, September 14—The Coming: The End Times and Resurrection**

Readings: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, 1 Corinthians 15, Philippians 3:20-21

A core part of Paul's teaching is that Jesus is the Messiah promised to set things right and bring a new age to the world. Christians are called to live into this new messianic age. However, the old age has not yet ended, but Christ will be coming in final victory and claim the victory won in his death and resurrection. On this week, we will discuss popular end-times schemes and how they differ from Paul's two-age understanding.

## **Week 6. Wednesday, September 21—The Reformation Debate: Law and Grace**

Readings: Galatians 2:15-21, Romans 3:21-31, Philippians 3:9

Paul has been a controversial figure in Christian history with both Protestants and Catholics claiming a different legacy. This has often distorted modern readings of Paul. On this week we will learn what Paul was teaching about grace and law and the role of faith.

## **Week 7. Wednesday, Sept. 28—St. Paul and His Traveling Companions w/ The Rev. Emily Kincaid**

Paul set off with Barnabas, but then they had falling out. He partnered with Silas to reach the world. We also know that Luke and many others travel with him. History even says that his last missionary partner was the female Apostle Thecla.

## **Week 8. Wednesday, October 5—Paul's Great Thing: Building on the Apostolic Foundation**

Readings: Philippians 2:1-11, 1 Corinthians 1:18--2:5

We learn what tradition says about Paul's death and legacy. We share what we have learned about Paul and his new significance for us, and what Paul has to offer to the church today.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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