

# Introduction to the New Testament History and Literature

## Lecture 14: Paul as Missionary

### Transcript

<https://oyc.yale.edu/religious-studies/rlst-152/lecture-14>

#### Overview

The New Testament and other texts provide us with many accounts of the Apostle Paul, some that contradict each other. Throughout the history of Christianity, Paul has assumed many different roles for different people. For the early Christians he was primarily a martyr. For St. Augustine, and later Martin Luther, he was a man interpreting the Gospel through his psychological struggle with guilt. The historical Paul seems to have been a man preaching an apocalyptic message to the gentiles.

#### 1. Paul, the Protean Apostle

[1] *Professor Dale Martin:* The last time we talked about the historical Jesus, and I talked about some of the methodology that scholars debate about what criteria you use to figure out what in the Gospels might tell you something about the actual historical Jesus and what may be later writing, or myths, or legends, or editions of the Gospel writers themselves. There's a very similar kind of problem with Paul, and it's rather debatable what we know historically about the historical Paul than what we find in different literary accounts. With Paul there's a lot more to go on. For one thing, as I'll explain later today, we actually have at least seven letters from Paul that he wrote himself that most scholars believe are actually authentic to Paul. Then we have some other letters that are written in his name. We also have the traditions that are in the Book of Acts of the Apostles that you've read, which talk about Paul and his travels. There's a lot more material to go on with Paul but there's still quite a bit of debate about what is historical about Paul and what is later legend, or what is stuff that's just in some of the letters that may not have been by him at all.

[2] In fact, if you remember, we go back to the lecture we had at the very beginning of the semester, one of the times where we talked about where does Paul go when in the Book of Acts, where does he go according to Galatians 1 and 2. At that point I tried to show that the

two accounts of Paul's back and forth between Damascus and Jerusalem, the amount of time he spent in Jerusalem, when he was there, for how long, who he saw, who knew him, all those different things that are presented in the Book of Acts, I argued are probably not historical because if we've got Paul's own descriptions of his movements in Galatians 1 and 2, it's much more likely, we think, that we have more accurate historical material from Galatians than we do from Acts. That's one of the places we would go is first to try to see what we've got in Acts, what do we have in his letters. This is a controversial thing too. What I've said is Paul probably didn't spend nearly as much time in Jerusalem as the Acts of the Apostles wants to make it sound like. I don't believe he started off his ministry in Jerusalem, as Acts makes it sound to be. There will be other things about Paul that I'll talk about today from Acts that I at least believe we should doubt whether they're historical, or at least we can't use them in any kind of dependable way as providing a biography of the Apostle Paul.

[3] What does Paul though tell us about himself? Well actually let me say this, that's not all there is with Paul. There's a ton more material about Paul that you have to work through in the whole European tradition. Paul has been thought of as the founder of Christianity. Some people have said, Jesus was not really the founder of Christianity, he was a moral prophet, he went around talking about

different things, Paul was the one who really founded Christianity, he was the one who built churches, he was the one who came up with the dogmas and doctrines of Christianity, he's the one who preached that what's the central aspect of faith is faith in a crucified Messiah who's then raised by God, and it's faith in Christ that's the foundation of Christianity not, some people might say, Jesus of Nazareth's own faithfulness to God himself. All of these things, people have said, makes Paul more the founder of Christianity than Jesus is.

[4] In fact, though, Paul has been read in so many different ways throughout the last 2,000 years that people have even compared him to Proteus. Does anybody remember the Homeric figure of Proteus from the *Odyssey*? Anybody know? Proteus is this guy that is captured by Odysseus and his sailors, and they're trying to get a secret out of him, so they hold onto him and he turns into different things. He turns into different animals and he turns—and they keep holding onto him until he finally turns back into a man and then they can force him to give him their secret. Wayne Meeks, my predecessor in the chair I occupy here at Yale, published a book in which—it's just come out in a second edition, in which he talks about the Apostle Paul and how he's been represented throughout history. In his essay, he calls Paul the Protean Apostle; because Paul himself even says, "I have become all things to all people," in 1 Corinthians 9. Is Paul the kind of person who everybody makes out of him whatever they want to make out of him? He turns into different kinds of things according to who's looking at him, and that's exactly the way Paul has come across in many different aspects of Western history.

[5] The early church, for example, didn't think of Paul as being so much the great theologian that sometimes he became in later Christian tradition. They certainly didn't think of him as sort of the best Protestant Apostle as he would become for Lutherans and for Calvinists. Paul was mainly known as a martyr. In the early church when you see Paul depicted in art and in literature, most often he's not depicted so much as this great theologian, he's depicted as the great martyr, whose head was cut off in Rome. So the great martyr apostle is the early church's way of looking at him. Then St. Augustine, and then following him Martin Luther, they saw in Paul someone who was

more like their own sort of psychological way of thinking about themselves. They saw Paul as this guy who was really trying to be righteous. Luther tried to do everything, he was a Catholic monk, and so he was trying to do all the kind of things that the Catholic Church expected, and he just became crushed under all the requirements of doctrine, and ethics, and Catholic requirements.

[6] He finally—he was—he felt like I have to be perfect in order to be acceptable to God but no matter how much I try I can't do it, I can't keep the law, I can't keep the church's teachings, I'm this total moral failure. And so he read Paul as this person who experienced his life as trying to live up to the requirements of God which they interpreted as the law, and just found out you couldn't do it. This expressed for Luther a sort of universal human experience that all of us feel when we try to live up to very demanding ethical and moral guidelines, and we find out we can't. We always fall short of what God wants us to do, none of us is perfect, we're all sinners. This idea that Paul represented this psychological struggling figure of trying to be righteous and trying to earn his righteousness by works. And then all of a sudden Luther discovers, when he read Galatians and Romans, wait we're saved by faith apart—we're saved by grace through faith apart from works, therefore works don't matter, therefore all the Roman Catholic requirements that we have to do this, and that, and that, that's not where salvation comes from, it comes from simply your faith.

[7] This Paul then became the Paul—not the ancient Christian martyr Apostle so much but the Paul of the psychological discovery that true Gospel is, you're saved by grace through faith. It's nothing you can do, and therefore works of the law don't matter with you and God. The great Lutheran Protestant Paul then becomes invented as this man who had this psychological struggle and through this psychological struggle broke out through that into this discovery of grace, the grace of God. That became this anguished guilt ridden Paul who discovers Grace and that's been one of the main figure of Paul that you get in Protestantism ever since Martin Luther and John Calvin.

[8] As I said, there are other people, even in the modern—the nineteenth and twentieth century,

who became more interested history and they noticed that Paul, that Paul's letters don't sound like what you get from Jesus in the Gospels. They just sound like different kinds of stuff. Jesus was preaching the Kingdom of God was going to come. Paul preaches Jesus as the King, Jesus as the Messiah. In fact, people have said the message of Jesus was about God and the Kingdom. By the time you get to Paul, Paul's message is about Jesus himself, so this shift of the proclaimer Jesus, becoming the proclaimed in Paul, that is Jesus being proclaimed by Paul, is one of the shifts that historians noticed in the nineteenth–twentieth century. All of this stuff sort of–are different ways of figuring Paul in history.

[9] In fact, one of the ways that people talked about this was Paul was actually the corrupter of the noble pristine religion of Jesus. Jesus was a great moral teacher; he didn't care about all these Christian doctrines about the trinity, and about hell and heaven, and all this kind of stuff. Jesus was just saying things like, consider the lilies of the field, how they grow, they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say that it's Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. I should be in a movie, right? "Jesus of Nazareth at Yale." Jesus comes across sometimes as being this moral teacher who's floating around on boats in the sea of Galilee with his disciples saying things, consider the sparrow, and then Paul comes along, according to this reading, and he turns all that into this stuff about doctrine, and hell, and heaven, and doing the right thing, and God's condemnation. So for these kinds of people Paul was actually the founder of Christianity because he destroyed the kind of message that the historical Jesus taught.

[10] This is what you get from someone like Friedrich Nietzsche, who wasn't that crazy about Jesus but he really hated Paul. So Nietzsche said this, this is Paul the corruptor of Jesus' religion, this is that kind of Paul. "The glad tidings," that is the Gospel, the good news, "were followed closely by the absolutely worst tidings, those of St. Paul. Paul is in the incarnation of a type which is the reverse of that of the Savior. He is a genius in hatred in the standpoint of hatred." Nietzsche goes on to talk about Paul "by making the heroic but unfortunate death of Jesus into a sacrifice for sin," which is what Nietzsche thought Paul had done, "nailed Christ to his

cross." That's what Nietzsche says about Paul. The cross was Paul's invention for Christianity and that what's made Christianity.

[11] Or George Bernard Shaw, he has a great thing. When I was a high school kid, remember I told you about this. I grew up in this very conservative church in Texas and I went to this big public high school, and I mean I had gone to Sunday school my whole life and I wasn't very well read in literature. Well in high school we were reading some plays by George Bernard Shaw. We were assigned, I think, mainly the play and I was flipping through a bunch of George Bernard Shaw stuff, and I came across "Androcles and the Lion," I think was the name of the play about the–Androcles is the young man who finds the lion with a thorn in his paw, he pulls the thorn out of the lion's paw, and then the lion's very grateful and then years, years, years later Androcles becomes a Christian and he's thrown into the lions in the Roman Coliseum and it just so happens that the lion whose paw he cured is the one who's supposed to eat him. Of course the lion comes up and recognizes, and licks him, and he saves him. And so "Androcles and the lion" is this story about the Christian martyr who's saved by the lion.

[12] Well that's the play, but Shaw always appended these wonderful introductions to his plays, and sometimes the introductions are more interesting than the plays themselves because this is where Shaw, who was a wonderful atheist in the beginning of the twentieth century, where he just lets loose and he just slams all kinds of political stuff but a lot of religion. He just really doesn't like religion. I remember coming across this in a library or something, and here I was this pious little Protestant boy, growing up in my conservative little church, and here was this guy very, very smart in this introduction to Androcles and the lion explaining to me how bad Christianity was really and how Paul had screwed the whole thing up. It kind of blew my mind. It took me days to get over this, but George Bernard Shaw said this about Paul, "No sooner had Jesus knocked over the dragon of superstition than Paul boldly set it up on its legs again in the name of Jesus." Paul is the one who makes Jesus' movement superstitious or here he said this also, "Paul is the true head and founder of our reformed church, as Peter is of the Roman church. The followers of Paul

and Peter made Christendom while the Nazarenes were wiped out.” The religion of Jesus, according to Shaw, disappeared from the earth, and all that we were left with is this shell called Christendom.

## 2. *Who Is the Historical Paul?*

[13] So all those things are Paul. We’re going to talk about—for the next few days we’re going to talk about Paul, both the authentic letters he wrote, we’re going to try to figure out who he was, and then we’re going to talk about how he was depicted by his own followers in the Bible and then by some of his followers outside of the Bible. What does Paul tell us about himself? There are some important things, but there are just a couple of details.

[14] One, in Philippians 3:5-6, Paul tells us that he was of the tribe of Benjamin, so he even knows his tribal identity as a Jew, he was a Pharisee—now that surprises some people. In fact Paul doesn’t ever say, I used to be a Pharisee but I’m no longer, he basically just calls himself a Pharisee. In fact Paul’s the one Pharisee from pre-70 Judaism that we know much about at all. We don’t know—a lot of the rabbis of the Pharisees appear in rabbinic documents but those come from hundreds of years later. Paul’s one person who calls himself a Pharisee and whose writings we actually possess; so Paul calls himself a Pharisee. He says that he was a persecutor of the church before he became a follower of Jesus, and he implies that this was out of zeal for the law. Paul started off a very law abiding, in fact zealous for the law Jew, even to the point of being a Pharisee, and he says in Philippians that he was righteous under the law.

[15] Now, this is one of the reasons that scholars in the last part of the twentieth century started questioning this more Lutheran idea that Paul came to his knowledge of grace because he felt like he couldn’t keep the law. I’ve tried to keep the law, I just can’t keep the law, I’ve tried I just can’t do it. Well he tells us in Philippians that he actually was pretty righteous with the law, so maybe Paul didn’t have such a problem with the law after all for that reason. Those are the things he tells us in Philippians. In Galatians 5:11 he also says at one point, “Am I still preaching circumcision?” Now that just kind of hangs there, “am I still preaching circumcision?” The one thing that at least tells

us is that Paul, at one time, preached circumcision. Was that maybe the reason that he was persecuting these followers of Jesus? That some of them were not preaching circumcision. Well we don’t know.

[16] Now there are several other things about Paul that we don’t get from his letters but that if you pick up most books on Paul nowadays at the bookstore they’d probably tell you these things about Paul’s biography, but these are things that we only find in the Acts of the Apostles. As I’ve tried to get you to see, there are a lot of things in the Acts of the Apostles that we should doubt their historicity, especially when it comes to Paul. Some of the things about Paul that people think they know about Paul as historical facts only come from Acts. What are those? One, he was brought up and educated in Jerusalem at the feet of Gamaliel, a very famous first century rabbi. Well it’s only in Acts that Paul says that about himself. Is this something that Luke kind of made up or put in there, or part of tradition?

[17] His original name was Saul, according to Acts. Paul never tells us that himself. It’s not too unlikely, a lot of Jews then, as Jews now, might have two separate names, sort of their American name and then their Israeli name or something; their Hebrew name and their English name, so maybe Paul did have two names. But he never calls himself Saul in his letters; that’s a name that he’s given in Acts. He also says in Acts that he’s a Roman citizen and that he was born a Roman citizen. That’s a pretty impressive thing for a Jew in the eastern part of the Mediterranean to be a Roman citizen, and in the first part of the first century that would have been fairly unusual. But Paul claims that in Acts, but only in Acts. In Acts Paul is portrayed as speaking Hebrew fluently. He gets up in Jerusalem and gives whole long speeches in Hebrew, it may mean Aramaic, but sometimes in ancient Greek texts they’ll say Hebrew and what we think they probably were talking about was Aramaic, which is kind of a dialogue of—dialect of Hebrew and Syriac. Paul seems to be speaking Hebrew in Acts. Paul never in his letters gives us any indication that he spoke Hebrew. Did he speak Hebrew? I would say Greek at least seems to be his first language, and we don’t have any direct indication that he spoke Hebrew.

[18] Then one of the things that's important for us today: according to Acts, Paul's normal *modus operandi*, his way of operating, was to go to a town and go to the synagogue first and, only after he was rejected in the synagogue, would he then go preach to the Gentiles. Do you remember? This goes along with that Acts theme that we talked about, to the Jew first and then to the Greeks, so look with me because we're going to talk about 1 Thessalonians in a bit. Acts 17 gives the account of when Paul first went to the Thessalonica, at least according to Acts. Now Thessalonica is an important Roman city in Macedonia, that is the home area of Alexander the Great, and Philip his father, which is now considered by the Romans sort of part of—mainly sort of the area that's ruled also with Achaia or Greece. It's a Greek speaking area but Thessalonica is a Roman kind of city, it's Romanized to some extent, it's right on a major highway running east to west so it's an important place. Here's the way Acts describes Paul's getting to Thessalonica. Now what I'm going to do is I'm going to read this carefully because we're going to then go to 1 Thessalonians and say, can we confirm any of the Acts material from Paul's own description about what happened Thessalonica?

After Paul and Silas [this is Acts 17:1] had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three Sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead and saying, "This is the Messiah, the Christ, Jesus, whom I am proclaiming to you." Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks, and not a few leading women.

[19] Luke likes that phrase, he likes to say that a few leading women also were converted in different places. It's more than one place he does this.

But the Jews [we see that turn that we've often seen in Acts] became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the marketplaces, they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching

for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason's house. When they could not find them they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities shouting, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus." The people and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this, and after they had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go. That very night the believers sent Paul and Silas off to Berea, and when they arrived they went to the Jewish synagogue.

[20] They're arrested, they have to post bail, and then during the night they send them off, get them out of out, and they go to Berea, and again, Paul and Silas go first to the synagogue.

[21] That's the account from Acts, now let's look though at 1 Thessalonians, and let's compare a few things here. First, we're going to ask, what does 1 Thessalonians tell us about several things. How did Paul work as a missionary? How did he do this? He was going around trying to convince Gentiles to accept that Jesus of Nazareth, this guy they had never heard of before, who had been executed by the Romans way off in a corner of the world in Jerusalem, that this guy was not only the new king of the Jews, he had been raised from the dead and made king of the Jews, but that now he was going to be king of the whole world, and that even Gentiles should be loyal to him, and they should all become loyal to the God of Israel, precisely because the God of Israel had raised this Jesus guy from the dead, and therefore he demanded faith and adherence, and worship from all the world, even Gentiles. That's what he's doing, he's going around to different towns and he's trying to plant little house churches, little cell groups in the different cities of the Greeks where he goes.

[22] Here's what he talks about in 1 Thessalonians. He gives this long thanksgiving.

Paul, Silvanus [Silvanus is the Latinized name of Silas so we're talking about the same person that Acts called Silas called Silvanus here], and Timothy to the church of the Thessalonians, and God the Father and

the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace. We always give thanks to God [and then he goes into this long thanksgiving about their faith] because our message of the Gospel came to you not only in word but also in the power of the Holy Spirit, full conviction just as you know what kind of persons we preach among. You became imitators of us in the Lord in spite of persecutions you received the word with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit. You became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. [Achaia refers then to the main part of Greece where Athens of course is and Corinth.] For the word of the Lord had sounded forth from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place your faith in God has become known, so that we have no need to speak about it. [Now here's the report that they're getting and this has a few clues.] For the people of those regions [that is of Macedonia and Achaia] report about us what kind of welcome we had among you and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming.

[23] That basically sounds like a little nutshell of what Paul must have preached to them. There's a wrath coming, you're going to be destroyed in that wrath, you can be rescued from that wrath if you turn to this guy, Jesus, that we tell you about, who's the Son of God and God raised him from the dead and you will wait for him to come from heaven and he'll rescue you. That's kind of the nutshell of this message. Notice, who is Paul talking to here? What kind of people were they before they became followers of Jesus? Were they Jews? Is Paul talking to Jews? This is not a trick question, it's right there in front of you. He's talking to Gentiles because he says, "You turned from gods to serve the living and true God." So these are clearly Gentiles he's addressing so that's one clue about this is that Paul is addressing Gentiles in 1 Thessalonians.

[24] Look at Chapter 2:9, he gives us another little clue, "You remember our labor and toil." Now my translation, I'm using the New Revised Standard Version, and in order—as I said before, in order to make this translation usable for liturgical use in churches they've actually

made inclusive some of the language. It says—the Greek says, "You remember our labor and toil, brothers." My English translation says, "brothers and sisters," but the Greek just says adelphoi, which means "brothers," it can include women sometimes, so it's sort of like the word "men" in older English when it was supposed to include both women and men. The Greek adelphoi can include women but it's just the masculine Greek word, "brothers," here that's in the text. That's not just a linguistic point—I'm going to return to that later because I'm going to argue that there's something important about this fact that Paul seems to address only men in 1 Thessalonians.

[25] You remember our labor and toil, brothers. We worked night and day so that we might not burden any of you while we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God. You are witnesses and God also.

[26] Now one of the things to notice, notice what Paul's saying, he's saying that they themselves practice manual labor. One of the things that Paul wants to insist is that he didn't—he and Silas, and Timothy didn't live off handouts from the Thessalonians. He's insisting, we owned—we earned our own keep, we practiced our own trade, what exactly was Paul's trade is again—Acts calls him a leather worker or a tent maker. The word there in Greek is not exactly clear, but some people have said that if that Acts account is true, then Paul may have been the kind of person—there was not a lot of tents you made for city dwellers, some, but they made awnings that would go—these leather type and canvas awnings that would go in front of shops and everything to keep the sun off, and they did make tents. So if that's true and Paul was a tent maker or a leather worker, that's the kind of thing he would have made, but remember that's only in Acts. At least here we get a definite indication from his own letters that Paul was a manual laborer, he worked with his hands. He doesn't tell us exactly in his letters what he did.

We did night and day so we wouldn't burden you. You are witnesses in God also, how pure, upright, and blameless our conduct was toward you believers. As you know we dealt with each one like a father with his children.

[27] They practiced manual labor when they were there. Now look at verse 14, 2:14:

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. [They're in Macedonia he's talking about the churches also in Judea.] For you suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. That displeased God and opposed everyone by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved. Thus they have been constantly filling up the measure of their sins but God's wrath has overtaken them at last.

[28] Now what's going on here is at least that Paul is saying you people in Thessalonica, you received persecution just like the followers of Jesus did in Judea. Who is persecuting these followers of Jesus in Thessalonica? Pardon? Compatriots, in other words, Greeks. They're not being persecuted by Jews, they're being persecuted by their fellow Greeks. They're experiencing persecution too once they've decided to follow this Jewish Messiah. They're not experiencing persecution from Jews, they're experiencing it from Greeks. Now you put all that together, there is no mention of Jews anywhere in 1 Thessalonians at all. In other words, it's pretty clear that Paul is addressing a church that's composed of all Gentiles. They became followers of Jesus by turning away from idols. They weren't Jews. They were also experiencing persecution as the churches in Judea but they don't experience persecution from Jews, they're experiencing persecution from Gentiles, their own neighbors.

[29] Now notice how this doesn't fit the narrative of Acts. According to Acts, Paul goes first to the synagogue, he preaches to the Jews, some of them believe including leading women, and he forms the nucleus of his group with Jews, and then he adds onto that nucleus Gentiles. That doesn't seem to fit 1 Thessalonians where there's no Jews mentioned at all. The only people he addresses are Gentiles, and he says they were persecuted not by Jews, as is in the case in Acts, but by Gentiles. Again Paul's letters seem to provide a somewhat different picture than we got in Acts, and it's easy to see how Acts told the story the way it did.

Remember, over and over, the Acts of the Apostles presents Paul in the same pattern. All the people in Acts go to the Jews first, they preach in synagogues first, city after city, they're rejected by the Jews or at least by most of them, and then they go to the Gentiles later, so it's schematic in Acts.

[30] In 1 Thessalonians we don't have a schematic history, we probably have a much better idea of what actually happened, which was that Paul founded this church with Gentile believers and when they experienced persecution it wasn't from the Romans and it wasn't from Jews, it was from their neighbors. We're going to come back to 1 Thessalonians but that's just basically the set up that when we look at what's going on in Thessalonica, we need to look at 1 Thessalonians and not depend on Acts again to tell us the story. Any question about that before I go on?

### 3. *Paul the Apocalyptic Apostle to the Gentiles*

[31] Okay, other things about Paul, Paul has this many letters in the New Testament [pointing to the board]. As you've been reading in your textbook you've already noticed that Bart Ehrman talks about the undisputed letters. This just means these are the letters that almost all scholars will agree Paul wrote. The disputed letters—that is the letters that scholars disagree about, and then there are three letters that most scholars are agreed are not by Paul. The undisputed letters are Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. Most of us reject as being by a later disciple of Paul, maybe even written in the second century, some people believe these are decades after Paul's death that these letters are written, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. We also call these the Pastoral Epistles because they show Paul trying to teach Timothy and Titus how to be good pastors of a church. It's Paul giving instruction, so-called Paul, giving instruction to pastors of the church. Now for these letters there's a lot more debate about. I would say that—I've ranked them here according to how likely some scholars believe they may have been written by Paul. More scholars will take 2 Thessalonians as being by Paul; a lot of us doubt it. A few—fewer scholars will take Colossians as being by Paul with more doubt on that, and then Ephesians is a letter, is a

different letter written by a different person which used Colossians as a model, and more people believe that Ephesians is not by Paul. In a rank of descending probability, 2 Thessalonians, Colossians, and Ephesians are doubted as being truly by the Apostle Paul. That's just to give you what's going on here.

[32] Just for a moment, let me back up also and tell you before we turn to some particular texts in 1 Thessalonians. Remember the lecture about the house church and remember I talked about the Roman household structure and the patron client structure? Now this will be very important, especially for your discussions this week on Philemon. Remember that the Roman household is a pyramid kind of structure, with the paterfamilias, the Roman head of the household at the top, and that person's sons and daughters being next in the level, the person's slaves in the household being at the very bottom level. Then above the slaves, and below the sons and the daughters, you've got people like freed persons of the householder who become then the householder's clients. The clients give honor to their patron and the patron gives financial security and sometimes legal help or other kinds of help, social help, social connections to the client.

[33] You might even have free people, free men and women who are connected to different households even if they're not connected legally because in Roman law, a freed slave, the freed man was even legally a client of the patron, still owed legal duties to the patron. It wasn't like the person who was freed became entirely free and footloose and happy away from the household. They still had connections, both legal connections, but apart from the legal requirements you would have even other non-legal clients become like clients of a household. That's—we're going to see how different house churches start constructing themselves. Paul, in his letters, will repeatedly then address certain people by name and greet them, and he'll say, and the church that meets in your house or in their house. That's setting up that "I did it." The people he's named are kind of considered the patrons, the paterfamilias of the house church and then the house church has this patron client structure. Keep that in mind when we talk about this.

[34] Let's back up again and say now, so what did Paul teach to the Thessalonians? First, he taught them mainly to turn from idol worship and polytheism. Now this is hard for us to think about today because you don't go around to almost any church and they have an altar call, we had lots of altar calls in my church. They had songs at the end, "Just As I Am" sung with like 75 different verses and they're trying to get you to come down to confess Jesus as your Lord and personal Savior and be prayed for, and maybe be baptized, and they keep singing the invitation song until you finally feel guilty enough that you come down front for the altar call and "yes the busses will wait, the busses will wait, come on down." In almost no situation like that are they saying you need to turn from—stop worshipping Zeus and Apollo and Artemis and turn to the living and true God. Our Gospels today have other kinds of messages, but apparently, the most fundamental message that Paul was telling people when he went around to these Greek cities was idols are not gods, you need to stop worshipping these stones and rocks and things, and start worshipping the God of Israel. The God of Israel is the only true God; he's the only living God, all the rest of these are dead gods. That's the main thing that Paul seems to have been teaching as he quotes there in 1 Thessalonians. Like I said, he's teaching them to accept the God of Israel as their God, he's teaching them to accept the kingship of Jesus Christ as God's Son and the Jewish Messiah, to await the salvation of Jesus to come from heaven in the near future, so, yes, Jesus is going to swoop down from heaven, and Paul is expecting this very soon, and then to avoid certain Gentile behaviors, and he kind of will list sometimes things he calls Gentile behaviors.

[35] One of the most important of those Gentile behaviors was sexual immorality, or in the Greek simply the word *porneia* where we get the word "pornography." This is very difficult to translate into English because it could be used in Greek simply for "sexual intercourse." A *porne* also was used for "a prostitute" but it didn't mean necessarily someone who sold—a *porne* just was "a sex person," "a sex woman" or "a sex man," so *porneia* meant really basically just "sex." To Jews at the time it came to represent every aspect of sexuality that they believed were wrong and that only



Gentiles did, but they included a lot of things in this. Adultery would be included in porneia, all kinds of having sex with anybody else but your married partner would be considered porneia, masturbation could be considered porneia, homosexuality could be considered porneia, having the woman on top with a man could be considered porneia, if the woman uses a dildo or something to penetrate the man that could also be porneia, any kind of oral sex whether it was homosexual or heterosexual, any oral sex was considered porneia by the Jews, so porneia was just any list of things that Jews believed shouldn't be done and that Gentiles typically did, and that's one thing Paul is very much against.

[36] He talks about that in one place, look in 1 Thessalonians 4, now remember he's addressing here men who used to be Greeks and who thought—who probably thought nothing at all about having sex with lots of different people. The Greeks didn't seem to have many—of course women weren't supposed to have sex because the woman was the possession of the man, but they didn't care about men having sex with prostitutes, or other men, or other women, there's no danger in that. He's talking to people whose idea of sex was that it's not that big a deal, 4:1:

Finally brothers [he's not saying sisters here the word is "brothers," and you'll see why as he goes on.] We ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus that as you learn from us how ought to live and to please God as you are doing, you do so more and more for you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from porneia, [It's translated in your text maybe as "fornication"; it just means any kind of immoral sex.] that each of you know how to control your own vessel ["vessel" is the actual Greek, it may be translated as "body" but it means "vessel" so there's a debate among scholars, is this talking about control your own body as a man or to control your woman whose the vessel for your sexual overflow] in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion not with desire like the Gentiles who do not know God.

[37] Sexual desire and passion are linked in Paul's mind only to the Gentile world, not the body

of Christ. "That no one wrong or exploit a brother in this matter," "or sister" is not in the text. You don't exploit your brother and the reason that makes a big difference is that ancient people never thought about defrauding a woman by having sex with her husband, they just didn't think that way, but because the woman was the receptacle for the sexuality of the man, and she was polluted by having sex with any man except her husband, to have sex with another man's woman was depriving that man of his property rights, so it made no sense to talk about defrauding the woman here, the sister. It made perfect sense in Paul's mind to talk about defrauding the brother. "Because the Lord is avenged in all these things. For God did not call you to impurity but holiness, therefore whoever rejects this rejects not human authority but God who gives us the Holy Spirit."

[38] Notice what Paul's doing, Paul just like almost anybody else of his society, he's talking to men here, and he says, you guys, now you're in this new church, this new community, this is different from the way you used to live, so you guys, have your own mate and do what you need to do with her. Just control yourself and do what you need to do with her, don't go after the woman of your Christian brother. Why? Notice he says nothing about any concern for the woman. At least in this text he shows no concerns for the woman's interest. What he says is, if you have sex with another man's woman you will be defrauding your brother, you're robbing your brother of his right. That shows this very traditional Jewish sense about porneia sexuality that Paul is expressing. You can see why he needs to say this because he's addressing this group of guys who had all been Greeks.

[39] Now what is he also saying? Look at 5:1-11, this is something else he seems to need to clear up with them:

Concerning the times and seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you, for you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say there is peace and security, then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, there will be no escape.

[40] He's talking about that Jesus coming on the clouds of heaven now. He's getting to what he's—he eluded to it the first, now he's telling you how it's going to happen. This is how it's going to happen and he's telling them you don't need to be—he's reminding us of this, right? He's always said, you don't need to be told this, I'm reminding you of stuff you already know. This is stuff he's told them.

But you beloved are not in darkness for that day to surprise you like a thief. You are all children of light and children of the day, we are not of the night as of darkness, so let us not fall asleep as others do but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep, sleep at night, those who are drunk get drunk at night, but we belong to the day.

[41] In other words, he says, basically, stay awake, stay aware, it's going to happen, you don't know when, just be ready. Why does he remind them of that? Let's look back, 4:13, now this is after he's talked about porneia, 4:13, "But we do not want you to be uninformed brothers," I grew up in that—the King James Version says, "We would not have you ignorant, brothers," which the men in my church like to say, "We wouldn't have you, ignorant brothers, about those who have died." Now notice, now he's telling them something new, this is not stuff they already know. This is new material, so this is not stuff he's preached to them before.

So that you may not grieve as others who do not have hope [He's telling them don't grieve. People in the church seem to have died, he says, don't grieve, don't grieve.] For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so through Jesus God will bring with him those who have died. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, [Paul believes that he probably will still be alive when Jesus comes back] will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with the cry of command, with the archangels' call, with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, the dead in Christ will rise first. [This is not something he's told them before, see.] Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the

air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another with these words.

[42] This is pretty astounding to me. These people did not know what happened to dead people in Christ. Paul hadn't told them that when he preached to them. In modern Christianity, in fact a lot of modern religion in the west, we tend to think one of the main things people become religious for is to live forever, life after death, to go to heaven. What modern Christians think salvation is is salvation from death or salvation from hell. These people converted to this new group without having been told any of that. What seems to have happened is that Paul converted them because he said, Jesus will save you from this big apocalyptic coming wrath of God that's coming upon the whole world. So convert, come to Jesus, and he'll save you from that, he'll rescue you from that wrath. What they seemed to have was that, while they were still living, any week now Jesus would come down, he would destroy the evil people, and he would set up the kingdom of God on earth, and we'd have a new kingdom, a new eon that would last forever. God would be over everything, Jesus would be the king of earth, but it's not like it's going to happen in a thousand years from now, they were all expecting it to happen right now. What they converted to was to escape the wrath and to live on into that kingdom. They weren't expecting anybody to die, and somebody in their community dies, and they go, what?! Mary just died, she's going to miss out on a party, she's not going to get—partake in the parousia, which is this Greek word that means "the coming, the appearing, the presence" of Jesus. It's the word here for "the coming of Jesus." The parousia of Jesus, she's not going to be able to participate because she died.

[43] Paul says, wait, I forgot to tell you something, there will be people that die. Don't grieve. Now that's a pretty radical thing, in the ancient world you just don't go around telling people, don't grieve over your dead. Grieving is a big deal for everybody. You're supposed to grieve, right? Paul is so radical he tells them not to grieve. He says, don't grieve because, Mary's died, but when Jesus comes back before we all get swooped up into the air to be with him, the graves will all open, the dead in Christ will rise

up, they'll all fly up in the air, they'll meet Jesus in the air, and then we'll fly up in the air, we'll meet Jesus in the air, and then we'll all come back down here and have the Kingdom of God. Don't worry the dead people won't miss out on anything. Now isn't that curious that Paul has to fill in this big gap in their knowledge. The very thing that most of us modern people think you become a Christian for—which is immortal life or the immortality of the soul, or life after death—the Thessalonians didn't know anything about. They did sort of know this thing about eternal life I think, but I think what they thought was, that if you were still living when Jesus came back then you'd get to live forever. They were upset because people in their community had died and they didn't know what was going to happen to them. So Paul tells them this bit of information.

[44] In other words, what Paul had first told them was what would happen to them when Jesus came back, they would be safe from the wrath of God. Now Paul has to write to them to say, now don't worry, if people in your community die because it's all still going to happen, but they won't get left out either. It gives us a very interesting sense of what kind of group this was, that they didn't know something about Christianity, the resurrection of Christians at the end of time, that's so much part of the Creeds, part of modern faith, part of faith of the last 2,000 years, and these early converts to this group didn't seem to know it. So what kind of group is this?

[45] Now I want to go back to the fact that I said over and over again Paul never addresses any women in this letter. Now it's not because he doesn't address women in other letters, and other letters Paul does talk to women even by name. He talks about women's problems. If you look in 1 Corinthians, and we will when we get there, Paul brings up this issue of sexual immorality again, and there he talks to the husbands and says, you husbands don't go fooling around with somebody else's wife, but he also talks to the wives. In other words, Paul, in other places when he talks to husbands, he talks to wives also. When he talks to men he talks to women, he addresses women's problems in different letters, but in 1

Thessalonians he never talks to a woman at all, and he only talks about women when he's talking about men trying to get them to control themselves sexually. What he says to them is, control your own thing guys, the Greek word translated "body" or "vessel" also means "thing," *skuos*, that's what Paul uses there, control your thing. Now does "thing" refer to his body, his wife's body, or his genitalia? It's anybody's guess, and different interpreters disagree about how they would want to translate it.

[46] What it certainly shows is that Paul's addressing a group of men, and one scholar from Copenhagen has written an article where she says, we ought to take this seriously. At least at this stage in Paul's career, maybe he really did see these groups as being primarily male clubs. Sure, they may have had women and daughters and wives as part of them in a way, but maybe in Paul's conception these things were sort of like fraternities. The fraternity of Jesus, and that's why he addresses only men and he doesn't talk about women. And that's why when he's talking about—and these are a fraternity that seem not to have expected the resurrection and all this other kind of stuff, so Paul writes 1 Thessalonians to clue them in on it. What this would be would be a male club of Greek speaking, Gentile, manual laborers. They've now been initiated into a new group that demands adherence and loyalty to the God of the Jews and an expected Jewish Messiah. In other words, this is an apocalyptic Jewish sect of Gentiles. Now we'll see after spring break how some of Paul's other letters show that his churches, if they started off like that, they became a lot more complex later. See you after spring break. Have—you'll be talking about Philemon, a lot of the stuff we talked about today, house churches, that sort of stuff may be important for your discussion groups this—not this week right you're doing that next time.

[47] *Student:* We have class next week.

[48] *Professor Dale Martin:* Oh we have class—that's right, this is not spring break. Good, we can cover all this next time.

[end of transcript]