

# FHS 3102: PAUL AND PAULINE TRADITION

Handout for Lecture 5  
Dr Alex Muir (with Prof. Jenn Strawbridge)  
Week 5, Hilary 2025

## Paul and Ethics

### 1. Paul's Ethics: Introduction

- Focus: Paul's ethics are intimately related to his Christology and soteriology
- Is there such a thing as a Pauline Ethic? (Issues: contextuality, eschatology, justification by faith and not by works)
- Danger: individualism vs. community in Paul's ethics
- Influences on Paul's ethics: a combination of Jesus tradition, Jewish tradition, Hellenistic world

### 2. Major players in Pauline Ethics

Dibelius (1920s): Paul's moral exhortations have no relationship to his theology

Bultmann (1960s): Paul's ethics cannot be separated from his theology

Furnish (1960s): Paul's theology and ethics are inseparable with a focus on eschatology, Christology, and Paul's moral exhortations

Sampley (1990s): Paul's ethics as participation in Christ and a focus on being "in Christ"; the importance of community and the Spirit

Hays (1990-2000s): Paul as an 'ad hoc' ethical theologian; the importance of the cross

Horrell (2000s): importance of community and "other-regarding love"

### 3. Emerging patterns of Paul's ethics

The contextual nature of his writings is essential, especially if we try to apply Paul's exhortations to modern issues

Determined by the Christ event

The importance of community

The centrality of the Spirit

### 4. Paul's ethics in practice

- 1) Case study: the predominantly paraenetic material in 1 Thessalonians 4–5
  - Control of the body and moral purity: 1 Thess 4.3-7 (cf. 1 Cor 6.15-20)
  - Love for one another: 1 Thess 4.9-12 (cf. Rom 12.9-13; Gal 6.9-10)
  - Consoling ahead of the eschaton: 1 Thess 4.13-18 (cf. 1 Cor 15.51-58)
  - Focus on the day of the Lord: 1 Thess 5.2-6 (cf. 1 Cor 7.29-31)
  - Communal care for the other: 1 Thess 5.12-15 (cf. Rom 12.14-17)

2) Matters of eating and drinking: 1 Cor 8-10 (esp. 10.23-24); Rom 14

3) Paul's 'master story': Phil 2.1-13 (esp. 2.6-11)

4) Participation 'in Christ': Found more than 200 times in various forms in Paul's letters. Individual (e.g. Rom 8.1; Phil 1.1; Eph 3.12) and Communal (Gal 1.22; 1 Thess 1.1; 2 Thess 1.1)

Note also 'with Christ': "to live with Christ" (Rom 6.8; 2 Cor 7.3), "to suffer with Christ" (Rom 8.17), "to be crucified with Christ" (Rom 6.6), "to be raised with Christ" (Col 2.12; 3.1; Eph 2.6), "to make alive with Christ" (Col 2.13; Eph 2.5), "to glorify with Christ" (Rom 8.17), "to inherit with Christ" (Rom 8.17), "to reign with Christ" (2 Tim 2.12).

5) Paul's dualism between the Spirit and flesh (*sarx*) – Paul not totally opposed to works or the law (see Gal 5-6)

## 5. Key points

Paul's ethics are not a system of rules or instructions

'Being' trumps 'doing'

Ethical identity is being "in Christ"

Ethics are found at the intersection of the individual, the community, Christ, and God's will

## 6. [excursus into set texts] Ephesians Intro

Issues surrounding pseudepigraphy

The relationship between Colossians and Ephesians

## 7. Ephesians: the letter

Date, location, and recipients (all difficult to determine)

Authorship: language & style; theology (Christology, ecclesiology, eschatology)

Who are the recipients?

Few specifics about Paul or Ephesus. Does the author know the readers? Circular?  
"Paul's best disciple, one whose religious perceptions and theological vision are equal to Paul's own" (L.T. Johnson)

Absence of Pauline problems: Jews vs Gentiles; law; circumcision; idol meat; church order

Altered reference: Christ as body vs head (1.23, 4.16); Kingdom of Christ and God (5.5)

Unfamiliar language:

    mystery (Gentile inclusion 3.3-4; marriage 6.19); past salvation (2.8-9),  
    law "abolished" (2.15; contrast Col 2.14; Rom 3.31)

## 8. Ephesians Themes and Structure

Summary of the Gospel: All-encompassing vision of: Christ, the Church (chapter 1)

Ephesian Theology: 2.1-3.13

Ephesian Ethics: 4.1-6.20

Key themes/images: unity, *ekklesia*/'church' (9 times), "the body of Christ" (10 times)

## 9. Practice Gobbet: Ephesians 4:1-6:

<sup>1</sup>I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, <sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

## Next Week: Paul and the Spirit

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