

# The Heart of Paul's Theology

LESSON  
ONE

## Paul and His Theology Discussion Forum



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# Contents

Question 1:	What details do we know about Paul’s background? .....	1
Question 2:	Did Paul replace the Old Testament with faith in Christ?.....	2
Question 3:	How has the Reformed tradition viewed the relationship between the Old and New Testament? .....	3
Question 4:	How can Gentiles be counted as Jews and perfect law-keepers in Christ? .....	4
Question 5:	How do Christians receive Christ’s status? .....	5
Question 6:	If we are counted as perfect in Christ, why did Jesus exhort us to be perfect? .....	5
Question 7:	How do the natural and the supernatural intersect in our lives?.....	6
Question 8:	Is God going to restore the earth or destroy it? .....	7
Question 9:	How is Christ present in the sacraments?.....	8
Question 10:	How did the early church feel about the delay of Christ’s return?.....	9
Question 11:	How does the delay of Christ’s return affect daily Christian living? .....	9
Question 12:	How far should we go in trying to become all things to all people? .....	10
Question 13:	Did Paul embrace the entire Old Testament, or only some of its teachings? .....	12
Question 14:	Should modern missionary strategies be based on Paul’s example?.....	13
Question 15:	Can Christians divide from each other in a godly way?.....	15
Question 16:	Should our theology be academic or practical?.....	16
Question 17:	What are some practical ways to maintain spirituality in an academic setting? .....	17
Question 18:	Is it dangerous to reconstruct Paul’s theology?.....	17
Question 19:	How can our imaginations help us understand Scripture? .....	19

# The Heart of Paul's Theology

## Lesson One: Paul and His Theology

### Discussion Forum

With  
Dr. Reggie M. Kidd

Students  
Andrew Litke  
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#### Question 1:

#### What details do we know about Paul's background?

**Student:** Reggie, the lesson said that we don't know a lot about Paul's background or his upbringing. I was wondering if there are any other details that the lesson didn't mention that you may know. Or perhaps, in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, if there is anything there, what we can depend on that book?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, in the book, *The Acts of Paul and Thecla* there is a physical description of Paul being a short stubby little guy with balding and his eyebrows going all the way across his head but that was written late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century by somebody who had no reason to know what he was taking about. In fact, he was defrocked for making up this forgery. So for instance, what Paul actually looked like, we have no idea. And we don't know a lot of the specifics of his childhood. He says in the book of Acts that he was raised in Jerusalem, at the feet of Gamaliel. But we know a little bit from outside historians about the Tarsus that he was born in and at least the early part of his childhood growing up in. In fact the Roman geographer Strabo who wrote describing the Tarsus of what would have been Paul's childhood, describes some things about life in that city that do seem to show up in Paul. He says it was a city that highly prized education and Strabo says that one of the things that characterized the orators or the public speakers from Tarsus was that they could speak extemporaneously, that is without a text, without any notes, for a long time. And there is the story of poor Eutychus who winds up falling asleep sitting on an upper story in a room where Paul is preaching way into the night and he falls down and dies, and then Paul raises him from the dead.

And there is another anecdote from Tarsus that talks about the acrimony that civic debates could take on and winds up with people making humor about people's defecating. And then it escalates with excrement being thrown up against a wall and people just really being vicious towards each other. It just kind of reminds you that the world that Paul grew up in, and even in Jerusalem where he studies under Gamaliel, we know that the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Zealots, they're ready to go after each other in a heartbeat. And was Paul himself was a Zealot ready to go after Christians and put them in jail and have them executed if that's what it takes to protect the integrity of God. It's amazing, given that sort of background, to

see how much Paul tries to bring people together. He himself is perfectly capable of being pretty earthy in his own expressions. I mean he talks about his own righteousness being as so much refuse but he uses his powerful ability to communicate. He uses his amazing education, his educational background all in the service of what he calls in 2 Corinthians, "the meekness of Christ", to try to bring people together and to articulate the loveliness and the wonder of Christ. So it's really pretty amazing to think about the kind of guy he would have been in growing up where grew up and the kind of man that Christ made him to be.

### Question 2:

#### Did Paul replace the Old Testament with faith in Christ?

**Student:** Reggie, the lesson talks about how there are those who thought that Paul rejected the Old Testament and replaced its teachings with faith in Christ. Are there some examples that you could give us of people in history that thought this way?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, I don't suppose you guys have ever known anybody like that. I mean, how many times have you heard, "Don't give me the Old Testament God of wrath. Just give me the New Testament God of love." I mean, it's an idea that has been around since the beginning of Christianity. That voice really came to afore in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century when around AD 140, a man named Marcion who was originally from the middle of Turkey, Southeast Asia wound up in Rome teaching that there were two different gods, an Old Testament God of wrath and a New Testament God of love. And his main texts were ten of Paul's letters. He had cut out 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus because they had too much Old Testament in them. And he liked Luke, minus Luke's Old Testament quotes but there was no Matthew, Mark, or John and there was nothing else in the New Testament, just the ten letters of Paul that Marcion liked. And he used Paul as though Paul had denied the Old Testament God and was teaching a whole new God who was just love, no justice or holiness.

And there is nothing that can be further away from the truth of what Paul taught. Paul taught that the Old Testament God of wrath had sent his Son in love to bear his own wrath. And that's why Paul can say in Romans 3 that God is just and justifier precisely because he set forth his own Son to be the propitiation or the atonement for our sins because he had passed over all the sins that had been done before and laid out his own Son so that he could pour out his just wrath that we deserve onto his own Son. And what it means for Paul is that when we receive Christ we receive the one who fulfilled the law for us and was totally just and totally satisfied the holy demands of his own Father. And it means that when God looks at us he hasn't put aside justice and holiness for the sake of love. He has brought love and holiness together, mercy and justice together. And it seems to me like that would make a lot of difference in the way people live if we understand that there is one God who is both holy and just on one hand and merciful and loving on the other. But have you guys run across this sort of idea?

**Student:** Oh yeah, all the time in my churches and everything like that. But I was wondering, when you are relaying all this information to the people in your churches, should you emphasize more sermons on the Old Testament or should you adjust how we do the New Testament and bring in more of the Old Testament through that?

**Dr. Kidd:** That's a great question. I think there is a lot of wisdom in preaching from all over the Bible. If you are going to preach from Paul a while then preach from Moses for a while. Then preach from a gospel for a while. Then preach from part of the Old Testament that includes like the Psalms or the Proverbs for a while. And always see the Old Testament as being incomplete apart from Jesus who completes its story. And also, when you preach Jesus and as Paul interprets Jesus as itself, as the whole complex of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as being itself a crystallization and a living out in person of the story of Israel. So I think it's really important to keep going back and forth and seeing one necessarily incomplete without the other. I mean, you can't understand the New Testament apart from its being the rounding out, the cap-stoning, the completion of the story that begins in the Old Testament and will be completed in the book of Revelation.

### **Question 3:**

#### **How has the Reformed tradition viewed the relationship between the Old and New Testament?**

**Student:** In the lesson we talked about some of the reformed distinctive of Paul and how the reformers discussed Paul. Are there any things about the Reformed tradition that bring out the Old Testament and the New Testament that cohere that together?

**Dr. Kidd:** Yeah, one of the things about the Reformed tradition as opposed to maybe some other protestant traditions is the Reformed tradition really always kept a high view of the law. John Calvin in particular, for instance, in his worship services didn't just use the Ten Commandments to convict people of their sin, although that is one of the things the Ten Commandments do and we understand that from Paul because the commandments drive us to Christ by showing us our sinfulness. But in John Calvin's churches, you would also use the Ten Commandments after you had confessed sin and asked God for the power to live those lives because for Paul it's a "both/and". The law does show us that we need a Savior because we cannot be good enough. But for those of us who were redeemed, the law still communicates to us the character of God and describes what the image-bearer of God looks like and gives us a picture of what the Holy Spirit is transforming us into. And so for this particular part of the Reformation movement the law is still what it was for David, something to delight in, something that we lay up in our hearts not just so that we can stay away from sin but so that we can see positively the path that we are supposed to walk on, or walk down.

**Question 4:**  
**How can Gentiles be counted as Jews and perfect law-keepers in Christ?**

**Student:** Reggie, so what do you mean that Gentiles in Christ are full-blooded Jews as well as perfect law-keepers?

**Dr. Kidd:** The first thing to remember is that Israel's whole mission according to what God told Abraham when he instituted the covenant with him in the first place is God was intending to bless all the nations through Abraham's family. And then God told Abraham, "Look at the sky, look at the stars. Can you count them? No, you can't and that is how many kids you are going to have. Look at the sand can you count the sand? No, you can't cause I am going to give you that many kids and more." And the whole program of redemption in the Old Testament is to undo the mess that Adam had created through this one family. And through that one family, God was going to bring back into family relationship with himself people all around the world. And what was supposed to distinguish Israel, and we see this especially in the covenant given to Moses is that this was to be a people marked as those who love God who all their heart, their soul, their mind, and their strength and they were to love their neighbors as themselves. The problem is, nobody could do that. Adam couldn't do it. Abraham couldn't do it. Moses couldn't do it. Only one person ever did it and that's the one that Paul says was the true seed of Abraham. And he did that obedience that was to be a true hallmark of what it is to be God's, to love God completely and to love your neighbor.

But he went a step further and on the cross, as Paul describes in Galatians 3, he took the curse not just of Israel but of the whole world into himself for the failure to obey, for the failure to love. And when God raised him from the dead, God said, "I am satisfied." And then what happens when anybody comes into an obedient relationship to God by means of having faith in the Christ that God sent, who paid for our sins, for that person's sins, that person becomes a member of Abraham's family. Abraham's line is counted by faith. Abraham himself was justified by faith. And all those... What Paul says in Romans that Abraham became the father of all who believe, not just those who got circumcised but those who would never get circumcised. So what happens is those of us who belong to Christ become members of God's people which means God looks on us just the same as he looks on everybody, whether they are Jew or Gentile, as his own. So it means, what Jews were supposed to be in the Old Testament, a picture of people who were lovers of God and faithful to him, all those who belong to Jesus Christ now are and that means we are member of what Paul would call and did call in Galatians 6, the Israel of God. So yeah, in that sense those who belong to Christ are seen as being the God lovers that the covenant of Moses was all about and those are the ones that God was calling into relationship with himself to be the great family, the great worldwide family of Jew and Gentile who love God and are loved by him.

**Question 5:**  
**How do Christians receive Christ's status?**

**Student:** Reggie, I'm not sure I completely understand how it is that we are considered full-blooded Jews or perfect law keepers. How is that applied to us?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, I think that's exactly the question that Paul himself tries to answer at the end of Galatians 3. He says that, "faith has come so there is no more custodian. In Christ Jesus you're all sons of God through faith," and that would be Jew and Gentile. "For as many of you who were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." And then he goes on to talk about there's neither Jew-Gentile, slave-free, male-female. We are all one in Christ. The picture is we have put on Christ like a garment and because of that garment when the Father looks at us he doesn't see us; he sees his Son. And it means, he sees faithful Israelite. He sees faithful Jew. So whether you are a sinful Gentile woman, whether you are slave or free, no matter what whether you are from a Pagan background or a Jewish background., if you are covered in Christ he looks on you as a male Jew, fully circumcised and fully God's Son and that's just the way he looks at us. He lets us put on his Son and he imputes to us, credits to us apart from anything we have ever done, Christ's righteousness. And the favor that the Father has for that favored Son is ours. So in that sense, his work becomes ours. Our union with him makes us his brothers whether we are a boy or a girl, we are his brothers and he lavishes the whole inheritance upon us because in that respect we are all Jewish heirs of the promise.

**Question 6:**  
**If we are counted as perfect in Christ, why did Jesus exhort us to be perfect?**

**Student:** So with that understood, what exactly do we do with Jesus' statements in the Sermon on the Mount to be perfect? How does that fit in with this when we know that it is impossible for us to be perfect?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, I think those speak to us. They have sort of a pre-cross word for us and a post-cross word for us. On the one hand, they help us understand our inability, that "Who is poor in Spirit? Well, not me." Who really mourns? Not selfishly but for the horrible warp and twist that there is in the universe. "Who is meek? Well, not me." But one came who was poor in Spirit. One came who did really mourn.

It's really interesting when Jesus shows up in the river Jordan where John is baptizing the baptism for repentance and he says, "Baptize me too", John the Baptist knows that this is not a guy who needs to repent. He tells Jesus, "You should be baptizing me, not me, you." But Jesus says, "No, let righteousness be done for now." And what Jesus does is as the repenter who never needed to repent for himself, he goes into the water of judgment saying, "Bring it all on me." Saying let the flood of judgment



against sin fall on me, so that it doesn't have to fall on those who are going to know me. And then he rises so that his life can be ours, so then when we read the Beatitudes we read them the second way. And that is, "Lord thank you that you have committed yourself through your death, through your resurrection, and through the gift of the Holy Spirit to make me poor in spirit, to make me like Jesus. Thank you for the gift of the Holy Spirit that teaches me not to mourn cause I don't get what I want but to mourn over the residual effects of sin in my life and the residual effects of sin in my friend Andrew, and Wes' life and in every person. And thank you that you came in meekness to take me down off of my high tower of pride and to break me and make me a new person who is humble, loving, caring, and giving."

You run that same thing through the other beatitudes like purity of heart, being a peacemaker, being ready to be humiliated and to endure persecution instead of looking for the easy way out. Because of Christ, his coming alongside me to bear the wrath that I deserve and now to live inside me though the Holy Spirit, those beatitudes don't just become, "Oh, they make me really uncomfortable" but because of who Christ is they make me really genuinely excited that he is making me into that. Because, as Paul will say in Romans 8, we have been predestined to be conformed to the image of God's own Son. He is making us what his Son is and to me that is pretty exciting.

### Question 7:

#### How do the natural and the supernatural intersect in our lives?

**Student:** Reggie, you've talked about how union with Christ is a supernatural thing and you've also mentioned how baptism is related to union with Christ but baptism is very natural. I mean it's just water. How do both the natural and the supernatural connect to our lives?

**Dr. Kidd:** You know, that is one of the deepest mysteries of the Christian life, Wes, and I think about it a lot. I don't know how to approach it other than to point to the incarnation of Jesus Christ himself. I mean here is the second person of the eternal deity. I mean, if there is ever a supernatural being it's him. But because the invisible God wants a relationship with people who are made of dirt and dust and because he himself created dust and dirt to be a place that his glory is magnified and that project has taken a detour since the fall. But he is committed to making the earth a place that once again completely reflects his glory and he is going to do it through us, the invisible, infinite God who is Spirit sent his own Son as one of us so that somehow his supernatural world and our natural existence could reconnect. And what goes on in us is this amazing connection between his supernatural power and just the stuff of our humanity. It's a great thing and the early church thought it was so important that the physical be brought into this whole new project of recreation that whenever voices came up that said, "No, the flesh is not very important and it's just going to be left behind" that we declared those people to be heretics, the Docetists, and the

Gnostics in particular because we always understood at bottom that the whole was to be redeemed, to be purchased back, to be made once again to be a platform, a venue for God's glory. And what God gave to the church is things like water that pictures our cleansing and our renewal, and wine and bread that bespeak God's interest in feeding us through his Son to reconnect us to that which is really real, the supernatural.

So, these worlds come together. The Holy Spirit has to wash us and cleanse us or we are not clean. And yet, God uses water to bring me into relationship with that supernatural reality. My inner being is not fed by Coca-Cola and bread but my inner being is fed by Jesus Christ himself coming in and making me new. But God also has this means of making his Holy Spirit touch a very tangible thing through bread and through wine. A rather famous Russian Orthodox theologian named Alexander Schmemmann wrote that the Lord's supper is the one place where you actually do become what you eat because what happens is we take Christ into us by faith and the Holy Spirit invades our being and makes Christ more real and more personal to us. And our whole lives are about doing his work as very natural beings through whom supernatural things are done. Like every time you and I witness to somebody and they come to know the Lord, the Lord is using our very human words empowered by his Spirit to work a change that we could never make and the words themselves could never make. And it's a wonderful thing that God is doing to create this whole new creation in the midst of an old creation that he is not going to turn his back on.

### **Question 8:**

#### **Is God going to restore the earth or destroy it?**

**Student:** You seem to be talking about just now and in the video you talked about how God is not only going to restore us but restore all of creation. How do you reconcile that and passages like that in Revelation with passages that seem to say that God is going to purify the earth by fire or destroy the earth?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, he is going to purify it but he is not going to do away with it. He is going to transfigure it. The elements will burn like fire but from out of that fire will come...that is more like what happens when you take ore and put it into a refiner's fire. What happens is the impurities get burned away and the valuable in the midst of it, whether it is gold or iron or whatever, is what is left. So it's not a destruction of the world. It's more a purging of the world so that it can become resplendent and shiny and bright and new again.

So what that means is, what we look forward to is not just our bodies dying going into the grave and then our spirits just going to Heaven and getting halos, angels, and little harps to live some disembodied existence for ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. No, what it means is, our hope is after our bodies go into the grave and our spirits go up to Heaven and enjoy an intermediate state relationship with the Lord

ultimately the trumpets will sound, the dead will be raised and those who are on the earth will be raised up as well. And all of God's people will come back with him and we will receive new bodies that are more physical, if anything, than these bodies we have. And the earth will be like more solid, more dense, more capable of reflecting his glory in its created-ness only now recreated, not done away with but made new. So the picture is a New Heavens and a New Earth that come down as the New Jerusalem comes down.

### **Question 9:** **How is Christ present in the sacraments?**

**Student:** So in this meantime we are talking about all this spiritual and yet physical and all this kind of stuff. Christ has given us these sacraments and in what way is he present in these physical elements and spiritually? How is all that taking place?

**Dr. Kidd:** You know, my favorite theologian, his name is John Calvin. And he said essentially (paraphrase), "I more experience it than understand it." And what he would do in his churches 500 years ago is simply point to the elements and say, "Brothers and Sisters, the Lord Jesus has himself invited us to this table. And he hosts it, and he invites us to partake of these things and he lavishes his goodness before us. Receive them in faith. Come. Don't despise these things because they are just bread and just wine but they are his bread and they are his wine. And he becomes present to us."

One of the things that distinguished John Calvin in the reformation is that he had a very strong theology of the Holy Spirit. So as far as he was concerned, the actual physical body of Jesus remained in Heaven, unlike Roman Catholic teaching. But because John Calvin understood what John says, in John 14 and 16, about Jesus not leaving us alone but sending us a comforter so that he would not only be just beside us but in us. And what Paul said about Jesus receiving the spirit, pouring the Spirit out upon us, and the Spirit among us being the Spirit of Christ, Calvin really believed that as the Holy Spirit was among us to bring us to the table, to make the Word of God come alive to us, the Spirit made Christ alive to us and the Spirit made Christ present to us at the table as well in the bread and in the wine, not so much in the bread and wine themselves but in the eating and drinking together before the Lord. So again, how Christ is exactly there, what the mechanism is? He would say, "I don't so much understand as I know in my knower that it's going on." Jesus is there. The Holy Spirit is there, and he is there to minister his presence.

**Question 10:****How did the early church feel about the delay of Christ's return?**

**Student:** Reggie, in the lectures you discuss how the overlap of the ages and the delay in Christ's coming is actually a positive thing. But we often hear that it may have been an embarrassment or struggle for the early church. What do you know of what they understood the situation?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well Andrew, there is one place in the New Testament where it looks like there were some people who were concerned the Lord wasn't coming right back as soon as people thought, and that's in 2 Peter. And Peter just says, "Don't worry about it. The Lord is not short in patience, but a day to the Lord is a thousand years and a thousand years is of a day. You all need to be busy going out there and telling people about Jesus." And Peter's attitude seems really to be the predominant attitude in the New Testament. It surely was Paul's and I think it is worth underlining, Paul didn't go around worrying about, "Well, when is he coming back?" Paul was so excited that he came and he is coming again and for him the perspective is, "Look what God is doing now. There is this fullness of Jew and God's not going to stop until he's got the fullness of Jew. There is this fullness of Gentile and God's not going to unleash the trumpet blowers until the last Gentile is in."

Sometimes like I just love to sit in airports and I just look at all the people that I don't know and I am surprised at the infinite imagination of God in the way he makes all these different people. Each one is bearing his image in a particular way, and each one potentially one of his special children and I'm kind of glad I'm not the God who has to say, "Hmm, I've had enough." And Paul has this sense of my job, our job, is to go tell cause we never know when that fullness is in. Paul also has this sense that there is this maturity, a rounding-out-ness of perfection even of the church that the Lord is committed to, that Jesus is making his bride radiant for his return. And what is often approached like in the modern world as being a problem of the delay of the parousia that just wasn't in Paul's field of vision at all. What he was about was, "Oh Lord, thank you for this day of new creation. Now is the day of salvation. Now we get to go tell people the resurrection has begun in Jesus and one day it is going to be completed when he comes back. Come on in. Come on down and become a part of it." His robust sense of history and our sense of what it is to be able to contribute to the kingdom is just pretty amazing to me.

**Question 11:****How does the delay of Christ's return affect daily Christian living?**

**Student:** Now, it seems kind of obvious how this should impact missions and evangelism. How does this understanding impact the laity in other kinds of vocations, you know, going to be an office worker, going to be a lawyer, or whatever?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, that's a great question because it's important for us to understand that God made a whole creation that he is in the business of redeeming. And he is going to save us in the body. We are not just souls with ears stuck on, even though these bodies are going to give way to glorified, if anything, denser bodies. These bodies as part of the creation that he has not forsaken are the vessels, the means through which we communicate his character. And one of the things that we have the opportunity to do and in fact the obligation to do, going all the way back to God's terms to Adam and Even when he created them, to fill the earth, subdue it. We are supposed to tend it. We are supposed to draw out, as much as we can, creation's potential to reflect God's glory. That means conserving it. It also means bringing out its potential, cultivating the earth, and mining the earth so we can create buildings and edifices and civilizations that, even if imperfectly, nonetheless reflect his glory. So that means if I am an architect, I am doing something that is like what God does. If I am a dentist, it means just even in curbing the decay of tooth decay, I am reflecting his image and I am taking care of the creation he has made and has declared as good and that he will one day make perfect. So it means that whether we are telling the story of Jesus or whether we are living the story of Jesus in our vocations with our hands and with our feet, we are fulfilling what he wants us to do and fulfilling that great mandate to fill the earth and subdue it and to bring it under his dominion.

### Question 12:

**How far should we go in trying to become all things to all people?**

**Student:** Reggie, in 1 Corinthians 9:20 Paul talks about becoming like a Jew in order to reach the Jews. What are the implications for that verse for us today? How far can we go in enculturating ourselves for the sake of evangelism?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well Wes, I think what Paul really wants us to think about is less how far should we go because then, you know, it's about rules, you know, making a line and do I step over the line or not step over the line? And that always gets: a) very complicated and then: b) very legalistic. And we wind up living out of fear instead of boldness, and grace, power and love. I think the first kind of thing to think about in those statements where Paul says...well, he doesn't just say, "To the Jew I became a Jew." He says, "To the Gentile I became as a Gentile so that I might win them." I think the thing to see Paul doing in the first place is exercising this amazing lack of self-consciousness. He is not worried so much about an identity that he establishes in one mode or another. What he does is become so focused on the people that he is trying to meet as one whose own identity is shaped far more fundamentally by what it is to belong to Christ than by how he thinks of himself as, well, like me, I am a professor and what do professors do? Well, professors teach or somebody else who says, "Well, I am a preacher, so what do preachers do?" Or "I am an American" and so I project this and I am English or "I am..." whatever. He wants us and this is what he is doing throughout 1 Corinthians, is to get our bearings of what it is to be bought

with a price and to live as those who belong to God and then simply to show up. For him it means a real elasticity in terms of being able to flex with this group and then flex with that group. But it really isn't for him about trying to figure out what the limits are on how Jewish is too Jewish or how Gentile is too Gentile. He is really calling us more to a self-aware lack of preoccupation with self, if that makes any sense.

**Student:** Could you elaborate on what that means a little bit more for me?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, what do you think it means?

**Student:** I have no clue.

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, are you in situations where you are kind of, "Well, I don't know if I would do it that way but I can go with it"?

**Student:** Yeah, I can see that. I think what may get a little weird is when you throw kids into the situation. If you have children and you want to put them in certain situations or you are in a situation yourself and you have brought your children into that, what do you do?

**Dr. Kidd:** My first job with my kids is to protect them. My first job with my kids is to protect them. My second job is to expand their horizons. So my first priority would be to make sure I don't throw them into such confusion that they are just going to be bad. Or in the first place, I am not going to let them be harmed and in the second place I am not going to let become so confused that they are just like, "What is going on?" But if I have the opportunity to show the love and respect for strangers that are consistent with Jesus' character, I am absolutely going to do that.

**Student:** Reggie, so the point you are making is that the issue is not about rules or boundaries but really about the ministering to people and how we can do that. So, are there ways or strategies that we can go about doing this in missions and evangelism that are perhaps wiser or better than others?

**Dr. Kidd:** I think when I work with a particular people group, I am going to find that people group having a certain kind of way of doing things and being. And what Paul is saying is, "I can get out of myself and get into their way of doing and being in order to communicate the gospel." Now, what happens when the gospel takes root there is that we then together are supposed to go deeper into Scripture and into the whole culture of the Bible and then get our bearings as Christ himself becomes more formed in our midst so that we together come to understand what are the places where we need to preserve this way of doing in deed, so that we can reach other people. But then, where are the values and assumptions of that way of being and doing that really kind of stand in tension with Scripture that need to be challenged? And then we need, I think, to develop relationships with other parts of the body of Christ that have different cultural assumptions and become connected, to become a part of the larger

church of Christ. God isn't interested in just coming into a place and getting isolated individuals saved and then just kind of blessing the sinfulness that is in the culture. God is in the business of redeeming, not just blessing and leaving alone. So we need to get the altitude of a deeper engagement with Scripture and the altitude of being connected with the rest of the body of Christ so then we can stay rooted in that particular community but then also figure out where we need to go to city hall and say, "You know, this isn't right." Or to just talk with people about a less greedy, a less glutinous, a less hostile way of living and doing and being and in that way we become a city set on a hill, precisely because we are still part of the community, but we have these larger perspectives from Scripture and from the rest of the body of Christ.

### Question 13:

#### Did Paul embrace the entire Old Testament, or only some of its teachings?

**Student:** Reggie, it seems apparent that Paul has a great appreciation for the Old Testament of Scriptures as we see in 2 Timothy 3:14 and 16 but at times he seems to pick and choose what he latches onto as we see in Galatians, for instance, where he says, "It's neither circumcision or un-circumcision. It's all about the new creation." How do we reconcile those and what do we do with that?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, the mention of circumcision and un-circumcision is a good starting point. Yeah, sometimes it can feel like Paul is being pretty arbitrary. I mean, Peter must have been like, "Whoa, whoa, what did I do wrong?" when Paul got so mad at him because he was refusing to sit with people who were uncircumcised and eat food with them. But what we need to understand for Paul is the Old Testament as God's Word was all about one story and that story has its center point in Jesus Christ and all the commandments, all the warnings, all the threats, all the promises, everything was pointing to Christ. So once you get to the other side of the cross, Paul feels like he has to read everything through the lens of the cross. Take circumcision. Circumcision was the sign given in the old covenant as being a member of God's people. It was a picture of the dedication of the person to God's service. It was a picture through this bloody act of a curse against sin and the penalty of death if you fail to obey the terms of the covenant. It meant being a part of the people of God but it could only be given to males, to little Jewish boys not to girls. And it couldn't in fact make people clean.

But what happened on Good Friday was that the foreskin of the human race hung on a cross and Paul says that we have now been circumcised with the circumcision not made with hands in the circumcision of Christ. So what he sees happening in Christ on the cross is that our circumcision is undergone for us when Christ is cut off from the land of the living and cast away, cursed. But then when God raises him up from the dead and gives us the same Spirit that raised Jesus up from the dead so that we can believe in him, we receive our circumcision because we receive Christ the one



who was circumcised for us. So when Paul says, "Don't get circumcised, Gentiles," it's not that circumcision isn't important to him anymore, it's just the cross of Jesus Christ has so transformed it that Old Testament old covenant symbol has come into its own. So it is just totally inappropriate that literal circumcision be administered anymore. Instead it gets replaced by its greater fulfillment in baptism because baptism pictures the same things. It pictures what is it to be totally dedicated to the Lord. It pictures in a bloodless way what it means to undergo death and then to be raised again. And baptism is what incorporates us into the body of Christ or into the family of God.

And in one matter after another, if we just look more closely at what Paul is doing with Old Testament things that he seems to just cavalierly set aside or to just ignore, I think we would see that he actually ramps them up and gives them even greater significance. Take something like the tithe. Paul never recapitulates or repeats the principle of a tithe. He never goes to a church and says, "You know, you guys need to be giving ten percent because that's what the law said." Well, we know that Jesus articulated the principle of the tithe. He said, "Sure. You need to be tithing your mint and your tithing your cumin," the little garden spices. But he says, "You also need to be not neglecting the weightier things of the law, love, Justice and mercy."

And for Paul, the way this gets carried over to us is, "Brothers and sisters, you were bought with a price. You were redeemed with the most extravagant outlay of resources imaginable. You don't belong to yourselves. You don't belong to yourselves, not just your wealth but the whole of your being belongs now to God. And you know what God wants from you? Everything. And do you know what he wants from me? Everything. So I am here to serve him. And how much of my resources does that mean he owns? Every single dime, not just a tenth but the whole thing." And now what God is looking for is what Paul calls in 2 Corinthians 8, a hilarious giver, a joyful giver, a cheerful giver. And he wants me to look at myself, and he wants me to look at my bank account and say, "How much of that is his? And how can it all be used to benefit his people, to benefit a world that doesn't know him, and to build his kingdom. And what I need to keep back to live on, that's a gift too." But it's just that all of the Old Testament comes over but it all goes through the cross and then we are given the Spirit and grace and the liberty of being his sons and daughters to figure out how those things get worked out, and the counsel of one another. We really need each other's help to figure out what those things are and that's one of the reasons we have fellowship with each other.

### **Question 14:**

**Should modern missionary strategies be based on Paul's example?**

**Student: Reggie, can you summarize for us Paul's missionary methods and how they developed? And should we base our modern mission strategies on what Paul did?**



**Dr. Kidd:** Let me think about that. That's a good question, Wes. I think of three things that come up in Paul's missionary journeys that are worth thinking about for modern missions. One is something that stays consistent all the way through and it is that he tried to minister not on his own but he always surrounded with a retinue, even when he breaks up. When he goes out for the 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey, it is Saul and Barnabas and they together are working but even the two of them, they have a retinue that travels with them. And even when they break up at the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey and they simply agree that they can't work together at least for now, Barnabas goes back to Cyprus but he takes John Mark with him, so that becomes a two-person mission. And Paul picks up Silas and takes him with him into Asian Minor and along the way picks up Timothy. And all the way through, and all during Paul's writing ministry, he's talking about the people that are with him that he is ministering with. So it is ministry in community. That's one important takes away from Paul's missionary journeys.

The second thing is something that changes after the 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey. In the 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey, they simply show up in town and as long as people will stand there, they'll talk. But then what happens is as people in the Jewish synagogues get upset with them, they wind up getting kicked out of town and Paul even gets left for dead. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, it looks like there is a change of strategy. I think it was occasioned by the one place in the 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey where Paul had a benefactor and it was on the island of Cyprus when he goes before Sergius Paulus and proclaims the gospel and this governor believes and Paul is protected. Well, I think Paul does some reflection after the 1<sup>st</sup> missionary journey. And I say I think that It is an opinion the text doesn't really say, he may have thought about some other things too.

But one of the things that's noticeable in the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey that's different is that he winds up getting more hooked into, more rooted, embedded in the communities he is ministering too. For instance, in Philippi he winds up accepting the hospitality of Lydia. He winds up accepting hospitality in other cities as well. Also he takes up his trade, or brings his trade with him of tent-making so he is not dependent upon people supporting him financially. So he receives the protection of a local host. He works with his hands. And also in the 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, he appeals to his Roman citizenship when injustice is being done to him. So he works more carefully, I think, to take advantage of local support, of his own ability to support himself, and then political protection so that the gospel can be proclaimed. So I think there are probably some principles there that we can carry into a mission strategy.

And then the third thing is yet one more thing that I think stays consistent throughout his ministry, and that's the principle "to the Jew first and also to the Greek". Now practically what that meant for Paul is, when he could, he would find a group of Jews to preach to first. Whether it was like Lydia and the women who were meeting at a riverside on a Sabbath morning or whether there was a synagogue to go to. He would go and he would preach Jesus to Jews because Jesus doesn't mean anything except as the Jewish Messiah. And it's that larger story of redemptive history that makes Jesus

make sense. The one place where Paul doesn't have a chance to do that is in Lystra where he and Barnabas, they go into the city and they do a miracle and these Pagans just interpret it for what their own religious background suggests. In that, they think that Zeus and Mercury have shown up again. They were supposed to have shown up centuries ago. People missed it and they were all upset and now these two people come and do these magnificent miracles and they think the Pagan gods are among them so they start to do a sacrifice to them. They have no point of reference to understand what the message is that Paul has come to tell them and what the miracle means that they have done.

So the carry away for us from this is the story that Jesus is the center of is what makes Jesus make sense. Like in the modern missionary world, there are missions organizations that I think have learned well from Paul's strategy. They'll come into a village and instead of just going right to the punch line: "Jesus", they will start to tell the whole biblical narrative of creation and fall, and God's call of Abraham, and his making of a nation through Moses, and then his raising up King David, and the divided on monarchy and the prophets, and then Jesus as the one through whom that whole story gets fulfillment. And so when they get to Jesus, he makes sense because of the larger biblical drama that he fulfills instead of just being this random name that folks can just plug into whatever religious value system that they have.

And by the way, I think that means a lot for the way we do ministry even in areas that we think of as not being missionary but just, you know, the normal world that most people live in in the West. It's so post-Christian that it really is missionary even if we don't think of it and people can do signs, they can speak in marvelous tongues. Miracles can be done but if they are not put in the context of the Bible story of creation, fall, and redemption they just become one more means to get power, naked, selfish, ego-inflating power. And so I think there is a really deep principle involved in Paul's doing to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. It's go tell about Jesus as the Messiah of the Old Testament, the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jewish nation.

### **Question 15:**

#### **Can Christians divide from each other in a godly way?**

**Student:** I'd like to backtrack just a little bit. You mentioned way at the beginning of the answer about Paul and Barnabas and then they split. What are some practical ways in church splits or mission organization splits that you can do that in a righteous way and a holy way where there are differing opinions but the gospel still continues in both avenues?

**Dr. Kidd:** Sometimes the cross can bring immediate reconciliation. Sometimes it doesn't. And one of the things that looks like what happened in Paul's dispute with Barnabas is that they didn't call a church court and they didn't demand that the other one be disciplined. They didn't demand that one guy be proclaimed right and the

other one proclaimed wrong. In this particular situation, they seemed to have decided that the wisest thing to do is just let it go and presumably go about ministering without slandering the other one, without making it a matter of the Barnabas party versus the Paul party but staying focused on we are both serving Christ even though we have hit this roadblock in our own relationship and just letting the Lord over time work it out. And we know that somewhere in the next 10 years there was some sort of reconciliation because we see in Colossians that Paul is speaking warmly of John Mark. In fact, John Mark is with him and when in 2 Timothy Paul is facing his own martyrdom, he wants John Mark to be brought to be with him. And sometimes that's the way the gospel works is just giving us the freedom and the grace not to pull the trigger on each other and saying, "I don't know why you are doing what you are doing. I don't understand it but I entrust you to the Lord and, in his mercy, I trust that he will work in your heart and he will work in my heart, and one day we will understand why the disagreement now and we will understand what Christ's work has done so that once again we can enjoy the fellowship that right now we just don't seem to be able to enjoy."

### Question 16:

#### Should our theology be academic or practical?

**Student:** You mentioned in the lectures that because of Paul's extensive traveling, he didn't have the luxury of being an "armchair theologian". What exactly did you mean by this and more specifically to our situations today, why would you go to a seminary which seems to be more academic than the daily grind of ministry?

**Dr. Kidd:** I think by Paul not being an armchair theologian I meant simply that as learned as he was he didn't write his theology just sitting up in some ivory tower just spinning out thoughts like, "What do I think the world needs to hear from my brilliance of mind?" He wrote his theology as answers to people's really pressing questions. I think there was an architecture of thought underneath it but his main interest was not so much in expressing his brilliance but in meeting people at their particular point of need. Now, is it okay to go to an academic seminary to learn his theology so we can apply it and are you necessarily therefore going to become an ivory tower or an aloof snob who is unacquainted with peoples' grieves? Not necessarily. I have known people in the academic world who really care about the people around them and see the whole gift of being able to read and have the time to reflect as being the occasion so that they can have relationships with the people around them and they see the academic place as being a place of ministry, like I think Paul would have.

I've also seen, and honestly I have been there myself, where people and me too have been totally immersed in the reality of life like working on assembly line or something like that where you are surrounded by people and yet you can live in this little bubble where it is only you and your task and you totally ignore the people

around you just because you are, “engaged in real life”, you aren’t necessarily engaged in real life. So it’s not so much a matter of where you are. It’s who you are wherever you are. And a person that gets on the waveband of the Jesus who incarnates God’s love for us and on the waveband of the Paul who says to his followers, “Imitate me as I imitate Christ,” you can live in the kind of world where you have the leisure to study, read, to write, and reflect but not be abstract from real life because caring for the people that you are around. You are reading for them as much as for yourself.

### **Question 17:**

**What are some practical ways to maintain spirituality in an academic setting?**

**Student:** Well, what are some practical ways that you found in the academic world to help keep your spiritual life up and very strong as you are growing academically and training yourself for ministry? Or even if you are not going to go into ministry and you are going to stay in academia, how do you maintain and continue to grow spiritually?

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, I have done it wrong and I have done it right. During one season of time when I was in seminary I was taking as many courses as the administration would let me, and I was dying on the inside because I was just taking in all this information but I wasn’t able to process it. I just had to kind of let it sit just long enough to get it out on an exam but not to filter into my heart and had no time for my new marriage and for friends or for ministry in the church. On a second lap, I committed myself to taking fewer hours and taking more time in investing myself in relationships, in the first place in my marriage and in the second place in ministering in a church and through a church and ministering to the people I was studying with. And you know what? I learned a lot more. The reading that I did got deeper into my being and I had a chance to really live the theology I was studying and that reinforced it. It made it more a part of me as opposed to just some stuff that was passing through me momentarily. So that would be my main suggestion for folks to make sure they take not so much that they are unable, even if they want to, to have relationships. But to really give themselves to relationships in which they are relationships that can reinforce the learning and relationships that can be the place where they live the theology that will be their actual theology.

### **Question 18:**

**Is it dangerous to reconstruct Paul’s theology?**

**Student:** Isn’t it a dangerous task to try to get behind the text of Scripture as we have it? If we try to reconstruct Paul’s theology wouldn’t we just be mirroring our

**own beliefs and projecting our beliefs onto him rather than really getting a picture of what his theology was about?**

**Dr. Kidd:** Well, the fact of the matter is if you don't try to find out what the theology is that is behind every verse or that's supporting every verse, you are just as likely to import your own assumptions into it, so that the verse will just reflect your own mirror image. You are far better off I think in trying to...all we are talking about is finding the larger context that makes every text have its meaning. And it means some imagination. It means sometimes paying more attention to things that Paul doesn't seem to talk about as much as some other things. But it means and gives us the potential of understanding him in a deeper way. For instance, in the video, we talked about how important his time references are. Well, Paul doesn't sit down and say, "Now, before you can understand anything else about me you need a little primer on my view of history; where it's been and where it's going." But those references to this age and the age to come, they show up in such pivotal places that once you have looked at them closely, it's hard to fail to see that they make a big difference in helping us understand why he says the things that he does. If you don't try to get at the overall architecture of his thinking, which is implicit rather than explicit, you wind up with things that just don't make any sense.

For instance, in videos to come we will talk about the difference between the way he approaches the Galatians on the one hand and the way he approaches the Corinthians on the other hand. Well, to the Galatians he says things like, "Well, circumcision is nothing; un-circumcision is nothing. All that matters is faith working in love" or "all that matters is new creation." Well, to the Corinthians he seems to say exactly the opposite. He says, "Circumcision counts for nothing; un-circumcision counts for nothing. All that matters is keeping the commandments." Well, which is it Paul? Is it faith working in love and new creation or is it keeping the commandments of God? Well, what we have to understand is that these are two groups that are messed up about the whole question of time.

The Galatians are living as though the cross had never yet happened and they needed to add to Christ's work, you know, their own shedding of their blood through circumcision and they are thinking about going back under the law. They're thinking about going backwards in time. And Paul says, "No, don't go back there. There is no life there." The Corinthians by contrast think that they are so far down the line in terms of time that they don't even need a resurrection. They think they have already arrived and they are king's kids. So they think that they are beyond what is written. And to them Paul says, "Oh no, no, no, no. You need to obey the commandments of God." So he says things that seem just the opposite but he says them to people because they are messed up on the question of time. He wants to pull both of those groups into this sloppy overlap period and if we didn't do the hard work of trying to get to the architecture that holds all those texts together we would just be left either befuddled or we would just make those texts say whatever we want them to mean and I don't think that's really very wise.

**Question 19:****How can our imaginations help us understand Scripture?**

**Student:** You briefly mentioned the word imagination and that's very interesting. I was wondering if you would be able to flush that out a little bit. How could we redeem our imagination to help us understand Scripture better?

**Dr. Kidd:** From one perspective, what Scripture is all about is the redemption of our imagination. You know, we live in a world that looks like the strong win and the weak lose. It looks like injustice will always prevail. It looks like evil will always prevail. I look at my own heart and I find myself just capable of doing nothing good. And the Scripture asks us to imagine a whole other kind of reality. The Scripture asks us to imagine that this was all created by a loving God who is just in his character, holy in his character and will inevitably necessarily because of who he is and the promises that he has made, will make everything that has gone wrong, right. The Scripture asks us to imagine, despite our own hardwired-ness for selfishness, that there is another way. There is another way to live beyond ourselves. The Scripture asks us to imagine that there is a greater reality than our worthiness of just being blotted out but that we could be the object of affection of the creator of everything. Scripture asks us to imagine this eternal dance of love between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Scripture asks us to imagine that the deepest reality in all of existence is the love and communication between the Father, and the Son and Holy Spirit. And that he is working to reincorporate us though we do not deserve it, back into that eternal communion and to make us family members, to make us fellow dancers, to make us fellow partakers of the wonder of his own existence. And Scripture asks us to engage with a reality that is not immediately apparent to us. So I think the Scripture is all about the reconstruction of the human imagination.

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Before coming to RTS, Prof. Kidd served as Pastor of Worship at the Chapel Hill Bible Church in Chapel Hill, NC. During the 1990's he was a worship leader and elder at Northland, A Church Distributed, in Longwood, FL. For 15 years he served as Dean of the Chapel at RTS/Orlando, and was the Pastor of Worship at Orangewood Presbyterian Church (PCA) in Maitland, FL from 2002 through 2007.

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