



Grace Communion Seminary

BI524 Epistles of Paul

Short Syllabus

**Instructor:** Michael Morrison, PhD

### Course description

Students in this course examine the 13 letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament. Students will learn the circumstances in which each letter was written – the problems Paul was attempting to address and the way he responded to them. Lectures will include questions of date and authorship, theological considerations involved in what Paul wrote, and how students can find modern significance in these letters. **Prerequisite: BI501 Hermeneutics.**

To do well in this course, you will need to study about 12 hours per week.

### Required textbooks

Thiselton, Anthony C. *The Living Paul: An Introduction to the Apostle's Life and Thought*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2009. 190 pages. ISBN: [0830838813](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0830838813). Price for a new book: \$19; used, \$11.

Capes, David B., Rodney Reeves, and E. Randolph Richards. *Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology*. 2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017. ISBN [978-0830851911](https://www.amazon.com/dp/978-0830851911). About \$25 new. First edition is OK, and costs less. A good overview of the letters.

You might find lower prices on these books by using [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com).

### Recommended resources

Morrison, Michael. *Exploring the Word of God: The Letters of Paul*. PDF and e-book formats are free at [www.smashwords.com/books/view/370593](http://www.smashwords.com/books/view/370593). This is a compilation of all GCI articles about Paul on the GCI website. If you want a printed copy, see Amazon ISBN [978-1502719072](https://www.amazon.com/dp/978-1502719072).

Wright, N.T., and Michael F. Bird. *The New Testament in Its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.

Student learning outcomes for BI524

Students will be given an opportunity to:

1. Describe how Paul's letters fit into the sequence of his missionary travels.
2. Give the circumstances of each letter, and explain how those circumstances affected the way that Paul wrote.
3. Describe how different sections of each letter are related to other parts of the same letter.
4. Describe how a selected passage in these letters may be used in theology and ministry today.

Requirements and assignments

1. **Lectures.** Lectures will be posted each Monday for the first ten weeks. See the *Academic Catalog* for study suggestions. You should look up the scripture references in the lectures. The lectures average about 28 pages each week, and we expect that you will spend about 2½ hours on each lecture. In many cases the lectures comment section by section on one of Paul's letters, and you will need to refer back and forth to the Bible as you read the lectures. An audio version of the lectures is also available, but this should be supplementary, rather than the primary way that you receive the lectures.
2. **Five forum discussions.** Part of the learning that occurs in traditional classrooms comes through discussion and interaction with other students. In an online class, this is done through comments posted on a forum. These count for 10 percent of the final grade.
3. **Two textbooks.** They total about 470 pages. We estimate that the average student will read these books in about 45 hours, or about 5 hours per week.

You may want to read less during the weeks when a paper is due, so you will need to read more during the weeks when a paper is not due.

4. **Three quizzes.** Short quizzes will be about the lectures and the reading assignments. These account for 5 percent of the grade.
5. **One exegetical paper:** Write a 12-page paper on a passage in one of Paul's letters. Choose one of four passages – 1 Cor. 2:1-12; Eph. 4:7-16; Phil. 3:17–4:1; or 1 Thess. 2:1-8. See the document “How to Write the Exegesis Papers” for more detailed instructions.

This paper will be written **in two parts**. The first part, discussing historical and literary details, is due at the end of the fifth week. The second part, discussing the original meaning and contemporary significance of the passage, is due at the end of the 12th week.

Students must consult and interact with at least one commentary that is more than 100 years old, and at least three modern<sup>1</sup> scholarly books, including at least two modern, major commentaries.<sup>2</sup> Suitable commentaries are available on the internet. Students who want printed books may need to obtain these through the interlibrary loan service of a public library, or through the GCS library, so students should select a passage and identify potential resources as soon as the course begins.

6. **One book review:** Write a 3-5 page review of the book by Thiselton. Identify at least two sections you found helpful, and explain how they are helpful. Identify at least one passage in the book that you found confusing, unpersuasive, or wrong, and support your view on that part of the book. This paper is due at the end of the 8th week.

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<sup>1</sup> *Modern* means within the last 25 years.

<sup>2</sup> *Major* means at least 15 pages per biblical chapter; a one-volume commentary covering the entire New Testament will not have enough detail. See the list of approved commentaries at <https://sites.google.com/view/biblestudyresources/paul>.

## Assignments, estimated hours, and grade weighting

<b>BI524 Epistles of Paul</b> Assignment	Hours *	Percentage of grade
Reading lectures and website documents	24	
Reading discussions and making responses	8	10
Taking the quizzes	3	5
Reading the textbooks	40	
Writing exegetical papers	60	70
Writing the book review	8	15
Total – about 12 hours each week	143	100

\* Some students will complete the course in less time, and some will take more.

## Weekly topics and assignments (tentative)

week	Lecture topics	Reading assignments <sup>3</sup>	pages	Assignments
1	1a: Introduction to the course 1b: Paul's three backgrounds 1c: Philemon as example of pastoral tact	Philemon	1	forum
		AT chapters 1-2	19	
		CRR chapter 1	44	
2	2a: The date and location of Galatians 2b: Overview of Galatians 1-2 2c: Galatians 3-6	Galatians	6	forum
		AT chapters 3-4	18	
		CRR chapter 4	32	
3	3a: Background of the Thessalonian letters 3b: 1 Thessalonians	1 & 2 Thessalonians	7	quiz
		AT chapters 5-7	29	
		CRR chapter 5	22	

<sup>3</sup> AT = Anthony Thiselton, *The Living Paul*. CRR = Capes, Richards and Randolph, *Rediscovering Paul*, 2nd ed. Page count for biblical books is from the NET Bible, 2nd ed., Times Roman 14, line spacing 1.1, page margins 1 inch.

	3c: 2 Thessalonians			
4	4a: Background of 1 Cor.	1 Corinthians	19	forum
	4b: Survey of 1 Cor. 1-7 4c: 1 Corinthians 8-16	CRR chapter 6	42	
5	5a: Background of 2 Cor.	2 Corinthians	13	paper
	5b: 2 Corinthians 1-7	AT chapters 8-9	15	
	5c: 2 Cor. 8-13: Paul defends his authority	CRR chapter 2	28	
The first paper is due by the end of Sunday.				
6	6a: Introduction to Romans	Romans 1-8	11	forum
	6b: Romans 1-4	AT chapters 10	10	
	6c: Romans 5-8	CRR chapter 7	42	
7	7a: Romans 9-11: How Israel fits into God's plan	Romans 9-16	10	quiz
	7b: Romans 12-16: Behavior	AT chapters 13-14	16	
		CRR chapter 3	36	
8	8a: Background of Philippians	Philippians	6	paper
	8b: Survey of Philippians	AT chapters 15-17	37	
	8c: Paul's Christology	CRR section on Philippians	11	
The book review is due by the end of Sunday.				
9	9a: Pseudepigraphy	Colossians & Ephesians	10	forum
	9b: Colossians	CRR, remaining sections in chapter 8	41	
	9c: Ephesians: cosmic victory			
10	10a: The Pastoral Epistles	1 & 2 Timothy, Titus	11	quiz
	10b: 1 Timothy	CRR chapters 9-10	54	
	10c: Titus 10d: 2 Timothy			
11		CRR chapters 11-12	50	
The final paper is due by the end of Sunday, April 11, 2021.				