

## Online Discussions in Paul and His Letters

### 1. "Who was the Apostle Paul?"

We have now discussed Paul in several facets. And that is just the introduction. For this discussion, I want to consider those different facets, Greek, Jewish, Acts, and whatever you have read in 1 Thessalonians and elsewhere in Paul's letters, and answer the question: who was the Apostle Paul? I also want you to consider how that may have changed, or not changed, what you have already thought. Perhaps he has stayed the same in your thinking. If so, express that. Responses to answers of the prompt should consider how Paul is portrayed in them and respond properly, perhaps giving complementary ideas or constructive critiques that will cause the person to consider matters that perhaps were not.

### 2. "Paul and the Women in Church"

Hi all,

I didn't realize that this was the weekly online discussion. I should have seen the connection between Greg's question, the story about his mock debate, with this discussion.

In any event, for this discussion, I want you to consider the passage in 1 Corinthians: **"As in all the congregations of the Lord's people. Women should remain silent in the churches, They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says"**(14:33-35). How would you understand this verse in regards to the three ways that we discussed, that is, just for the Corinth church, the ancient churches, or all churches for all times? Please consider this also in light of the earlier text in 1 Cor 11:3 (also, Eph 5:23) where women appear to be subordinate the men in marriage. Does this have anything to do with Paul's view about how God functions in the world and the idea that all things have an order—so that if things are disorderly, they are considered a moving against God. For this discussion, you may also want to consider the passage 1 Tim that Greg referenced during our class, **"But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"** (2:12). Feel free to take whatever position you like as long as you argue for it

### 3. "The Curse of the Law"

Hi all,

In Galatians, Paul states "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us..." (3:13). This is sometimes interpreted as referring to all of the church, all people, from the first century through to today. The suggestion being that the law in terms of ritual is no longer relevant for the church, because we have been redeemed from it. Is this so? Is there another way to read it? Is this an appropriate way to do so? Why or why not? How would you understand this passage? Discuss.

#### **4. "Paul and Slavery"**

We have talked about this a bit, but dig a little deeper for this one. We are preparing to read Philemon shortly, which deals with, apparently, a slave who fled from his master and whom Paul is making return. In Ephesians and Colossians, we have the Pauline command for slaves to submit to their masters. In some ways Philemon appears to be a letter that embodies this command.

I don't mean to start a conversation about Philemon but about Paul and slavery. Perhaps more, about slavery and the New Testament, and maybe even the Bible for that matter. Attached to this, I have given you an article on slavery in antiquity. As I have said, the institution of owning someone is never a good thing, even if in antiquity slavery was so prevalent that there were significant complexities in that slave trade that did not exist in the Transatlantic slave trade that we are familiar with in the US. and the various consequence of those historic realities.

Still, to my mind, Paul does not seem to seek its end. I do not think that Paul supports slavery as a system but he also doesn't speak against it. So, I wonder why? So now, I ask you why? What can you make of Paul's letters regarding slavery? Is it interconnected with some other teaching? Explain. Have fun!