

NT5319 Paul's Letters from Prison

3 credits. Prerequisites: None

 On Campus, Saskatoon

 'A' Livestream

 Video on Demand

September 7 – 11, 2026
Mon-Fri; 9:00 am – 4:00 pm SK
(11:00 am – 6:00 pm ET)



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“... that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.” (Phil 1:12)

Please note: This course includes reading and an assignment before the module.

Course Goals

Course Description

This course provides an integrated study of Paul's Prison Epistles – Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon – with attention to both academic interpretation and practical ministry application. Students will engage in contextual, grammatical, and theological analysis of these letters, while exploring their implications for Christian faith, leadership, and ministry.

Relationship to Horizon and MCS's Missions

Through the study of Paul's Prison Epistles, this course helps students grow in their knowledge of Scripture, their ability to interpret biblical texts, and their understanding of Christian theology. By exploring themes such as Christ's lordship, unity in the body of Christ, discipleship, perseverance, and reconciliation, students are encouraged to deepen their spiritual formation and develop as Christian leaders. The course equips them to serve faithfully and effectively in Spirit-empowered ministry within the Church and broader community.

Course Competencies and Learning Outcomes

To demonstrate competency in *Biblical and Theological Literacy*, students will

1. Interpret the Prison Epistles in their literary and historical contexts and distinct theological perspectives with the assistance of relevant secondary literature.
 - *Assessment:* Textbook Report; Comparative Reading Analysis; Final Paper / Project
2. Identify and explain key theological emphases and their significance within the Prison Epistles.
 - *Assessment:* Reflective Reading Assignment; Final Paper / Project

To demonstrate competency in both *Biblical and Theological Literacy* and *Ministry Development* students will:

3. Apply the message of the Prison Epistles to contemporary contexts.
 - *Assessment:* Reflective Reading Assignment; Comparative Reading Analysis; Reconciliation Case Study Assignment; Final Paper / Project

To demonstrate competency in *Spiritual Maturity*, students will:

4. Cultivate spiritual ears to hear the Lord speaking his living word to them in and through the Prison Epistles.
 - *Assessment:* Reflective Reading Assignment; Textbook Report

Course Work

Required Readings

Bible.

Klein, William W. et al. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Ephesians - Philemon*. Revised edition. Edited by Tremper Longman and David E. Garland. Zondervan, 2006. ISBN: 978-0310235033.

[DTL](#)

Additional articles and other resources indicated for assignment 3.

****While students have the benefit of accessing many of their textbooks online through the [Digital Theological Library](#), they will not have access to the Digital Theological Library upon graduation. Therefore, we encourage students to purchase select textbooks to build their personal library.**

Course Assignments and Activities

PRE-MODULE ASSIGNMENTS

1. Reflective Reading: Paul's Prison Epistles – 10%

In preparation for this course, you will read and reflect on Paul's Prison epistles. The goal of this assignment is to slow down the reading process and give space to really engage the text, both personally and thoughtfully. You will be encouraged to notice what stands out in the letters, think about their meaning, and reflect on how they speak to faith, the Church, and everyday life and ministry.

1. *Read all four Prison Epistles* - Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.
2. Write a *short Reflection Journal* for each letter individually. Each reflection should be approximately one page per letter. At the start of your journal, please include a brief note confirming that you have read all four Prison Epistles. For each epistle, respond to the following questions:
 - a. What concerns or themes does Paul seem most focused on in this letter?

- b. What surprises you about the letter in terms of its content, tone, or main message?
- c. Where do you see relevance for the contemporary Church today?
- d. What aspects of this letter speak personally to your own spiritual life or formation?

- Related learning outcome(s): #2, 3, 4.
- **Assignment length:** acceptable range: 1200-1500 words (4-5 pages).
- **Due date:** September 4.

POST-MODULE ASSIGNMENTS

2. Textbook Report – 15%

From the textbook, read only the four Paul's Prison Epistles: Ephesians (pp. 19-173), Philippians (pp. 175-261), Colossians (pp. 263-360), and Philemon (pp. 627-643). This totals 357 pages.

Write a 2–3-page textbook report in which you identify:

- at least three or four ideas that were new, interesting, or especially meaningful to you.
 - Evaluate the book's strengths, discuss any weaknesses or areas of disagreement, and
 - conclude by reflecting on how its insights can be applied to your personal spiritual growth and ministry.
- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 4.
 - **Assignment length:** acceptable range: 600 – 900 words (2-3 pages)
 - **Due date:** October 13.

3. Comparative Reading Analysis – 20%

Read the assigned articles (≈ 148 pp.) and compare the authors' viewpoints with each other and with the course textbook. Submit an analysis paper that follows general assignment requirements (see p. 8 of the syllabus) and reflects thoughtful interaction with the readings.

After completing the assigned readings, write 1.5 to 2 pages (450-600 words) analyzing each section and addressing the following:

1. *Summarize Each Author's Position*
2. *Compare and Contrast:* Where do the authors agree? Where do they differ in their interpretation?
3. *Biblical Analysis:* Which arguments do you find most persuasive, and why? Support your discussion with references to the biblical text.
4. *Personal and Ministry Reflection:* How does this study deepen your understanding of the theme? What implications might this doctrine have for Christian faith, leadership, discipleship, or ministry today?

Sept 15	1. Barth, Markus. "Election in Christ vs. Determinism." In <i>Ephesians 1-3</i> , 105-109 (Comment V). New York: Doubleday, 1974. DTL
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	2. Hoehner, Harold W. "A Discussion of the Doctrine of Election." In <i>Ephesians</i>, 188-193 (Excursuses → 4. Election →). Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002. DTL 3. Textbook: Ephesians 1:3-14.
Sept 22	1. Cohick, Lynn H. "Loving and Submitting to One Another in Marriage: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19." In <i>Discovering Biblical Equality: Biblical, Theological, Cultural & Practical Perspectives</i>, 3rd ed., edited by Ronald W. Pierce, Cynthia Long Westfall, and Christa L. McKirkland, 185-204 (Chapter 10). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021. DTL 2. Knight, George W., III. "Husbands and Wives as Analogues of Christ and the Church: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19." In <i>Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism</i>, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 215-232 (Chapter 8). Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2021. DTL 3. Textbook: Ephesians 5:21-33 and Colossians 3:18-19
Sept 29	<i>Based on the readings and the assignment instructions, focus your response on the following question: How do Philippians relate to the Roman imperial cult?</i> 1. Wright, N. T. "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire." In <i>Reflections</i>, vol. 2. 1998. Read here. 2. Cohick, Lynn H. "Philippians and Empire: Paul's Engagement with Imperialism and the Imperial Cult." In <i>Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies</i>, edited by Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica, 166-182 (Chapter 8). Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013. DTL 3. Textbook: Philippians 3.
Oct 6	1. Barclay, John M. G. "Paul, Philemon and the Dilemma of Christian Slave-Ownership." <i>New Testament Studies</i> 37, no. 2 (1991): 161-186. DTL 2. McKnight, Scot. ... In <i>The Letter to Philemon</i>, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017.: DTL • "The Social Realities of Philemon: Runaway or Slave in Search of a Mediator?" pp. 37-39. (Introduction, Chapter IV) • "Paul's Appeal for Onesimus (vv. 12-16)." pp. 75-110. (Text and Commentary, Chapter 3) 3. Textbook: Philemon.

- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 3.
- **Assignment length:** acceptable range: 1800-2400 words (6-8 pages).
- **Due dates:** Listed in the chart.

4. Reconciliation Case Study Assignment – 15%

Choose one of the following case studies and write a 5–6-page response addressing the question "What would Paul advise?" In your response, apply Paul's teachings on reconciliation, forgiveness, unity, and Christian relationships found in the four Prison epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon) to a contemporary conflict situation. Support your conclusions with specific biblical references and interpretation of the relevant passages. You may also use your textbook and additional academic resources to strengthen your interpretation.

Case Study 1: Restoring a Former Volunteer

A faithful church volunteer stepped away from ministry after a serious personal failure that disappointed many people in the congregation. Several years later, the individual has demonstrated repentance, spiritual growth, and a desire to serve again. Some church members welcome the person back, while others remain hesitant and distrustful. **What would Paul advise the church and the individual seeking restoration?** Questions to consider:

- What principles of forgiveness and reconciliation are found in the Prison Epistles?
- How does Paul's appeal on behalf of Onesimus (as an example) inform this situation?
- What is the relationship between accountability and grace?
- How should Christian communities balance restoration with wisdom and discernment?

Case Study 2: Cultural and Generational Tensions in the Church

A growing congregation includes members from diverse cultural backgrounds and multiple generations. Differences in worship preferences, communication styles, and ministry priorities have created tension among members. Some feel overlooked, while others believe longstanding traditions are being ignored. **What would Paul advise the church to do in order to preserve unity while honoring diversity within the body of Christ?** Questions to consider:

- How does Paul describe unity in Christ despite differences among believers?
- What attitudes and behaviors strengthen or weaken Christian fellowship?
- How can believers demonstrate humility, patience, and love toward one another?
- What practical steps might help the church maintain unity without demanding uniformity?

Case Study 3: Conflict Between Church Leaders

Two ministry leaders in a local church have developed a strained relationship after a disagreement over the direction of a new outreach initiative. Their conflict has become known throughout the congregation, and church members have begun taking sides. The ministry is suffering, and trust between the leaders has eroded. **What would Paul advise these leaders and the congregation to do in order to pursue reconciliation and restore unity?** Questions to consider:

- How does Paul address conflict among believers?
- What role do humility, forgiveness, and mutual submission play in reconciliation?
- How should Christian leaders model unity for the church?
- What responsibilities does the broader church community have in promoting peace and restoration?

Case Study 4: Financial Inequality Within the Church

Several wealthy members of a congregation unintentionally exclude lower-income families from church activities because many events involve significant costs. Tension grows as some members feel overlooked and unwelcome. **What would Paul advise the congregation?** Questions to consider:

- What does Paul teach about the unity of believers?
- How should Christians demonstrate humility and generosity?
- How should the church reflect equality in Christ?
- What practical changes would encourage genuine fellowship?

Requirements

- Length: **5-6 pages**, double-spaced.
- Choose **one case study only**.
- Use at least 5 references from Paul's Prison Epistles as the foundation of your response, with additional biblical references included as needed.
- Clearly explain Paul's teaching and apply it to the situation.
- Provide practical steps for reconciliation and unity.
- If you use ideas or wording from a source, **cite it appropriately** (including the Bible, and/or any book/article used).
- Related learning outcome(s): #3.
- **Assignment length:** acceptable range: 1500-1800 words (5-6 pages).
- **Due date:** October 17.

5. Final Paper / Project – 40%

Choose one of the following options:

1. *Textual Study Paper:* Requirements

- Choose ONE passage:
 - Ephesians 2:1-10
 - Philippians 2:5-11
 - Colossians 1:15-20
 - Philemon 8-21
 - *or* you may choose your own passage upon professor approval
- Length: 10-12 pages, double-spaced
- Include clear structure:
 - Introduction (include thesis)
 - Historical and literary context
 - Detailed interpretation of the passage
 - Theological themes
 - Contemporary application
- Use at least 10 academic sources, not including the Bible and textbook. These should include biblical commentaries, and academic journal articles.
- Include at least 3-5 references from the Prison Epistles outside your chosen passage

2. *Theological Research Paper:* Write a research paper exploring one major theological theme in the Prison Epistles. Requirements:

- Choose ONE topic:
 - a. Union with Christ
 - b. Christology
 - c. Spiritual warfare
 - d. Church unity
 - e. Slavery and Philemon
 - f. Joy in suffering
 - g. *or* you may choose your own topic upon professor approval
- Length: 10-12 pages, double-spaced
- Clearly define the theological topic

- Engage multiple passages from the Prison Epistles
 - Include interaction with scholarly sources
 - Provide theological analysis and modern application
 - Include at least 10 academic sources, not including the Bible and textbook. These should include biblical commentaries, Bible dictionaries, academic journal articles, and books on the topic.
3. *Ministry Project*: Create a practical ministry resource based on the Prison Epistles. Choose ONE format:
- Sermon series (3-5 sermons)
 - Bible study curriculum (4-6 sessions)
 - Discipleship guide (6-8 lessons)
 - Small group study guide (6-8 lessons)
 - Youth or campus ministry curriculum (4-6 sessions)
 - Devotional booklet (10-14 devotions)
 - Video or podcast series (1 hour with scripts/outlines)
 - *or* you may choose your own project upon professor approval

Requirements

- Must be clearly rooted in themes from the Prison Epistles
- Include biblical references and teaching outlines or scripts
- Provide clear structure and learning objectives
- Include brief theological explanation for each unit/session/episode
- Include at least 10 academic sources, not including the Bible and textbook. These should include biblical commentaries, Bible dictionaries, academic journal articles, and books on the topic.

This final assignment will be evaluated based on clarity of interpretation of Scripture, theological depth and accuracy, use of sources and research, application or ministry relevance, and structure.

- Related learning outcome(s): #1, 2, 3.
- **Assignment length:** paper – acceptable range: 3000-3600 words (10-12 pages), excluding footnotes and bibliography;
project – refer to the requirements for your selected format;
acceptable range: 3600-4800 words
- **Due date:** October 30.

Video-on-Demand (VOD) Student Requirements

As indicated on the course schedule, this class is offered by VOD. Students taking the course through VOD are required to indicate this during their course registration. While VOD recordings are available for any student who may be absent from class, non-VOD students are expected to attend class live following the class attendance policy.

- For this course, VOD students have *the same* assignment due dates as in-class students.
- According to the schedule below, VOD students are required to watch and engage with all lecture content and in-class activities. VOD students will submit a 2–3-minute video report that 1) affirms you have watched the required recording, 2) summarizes one thing

you learned that will help you reach the course learning outcomes, and 3) explains at least one question you had after watching the class recording.

- Day 1 Lectures and Report due **September 12.**
- Day 2 Lectures and Report due **September 19.**
- Day 3 Lectures and Report due **September 26.**
- Day 4 Lectures and Report due **October 3.**
- Day 5 Lectures and Report due **October 10.**
- Students registered to attend by VOD will fulfill the course attendance requirements through their video report submissions. They must submit their VOD reports on time to be registered as present for class.

Estimate of Time Investment (individual time investments may vary)

Classroom time	30 hrs		
1. <i>Reflective Reading: Paul's Prison Epistles</i>	6 hrs	Sept 4	10%
2. <i>Textbook Report</i>	20 hrs	Oct 13	15%
3. <i>Comparative Reading Analysis</i>	22 hrs	Sept 15, 22, 29; Oct 6	20%
3. <i>Reconciliation Case Study Assignment</i>	8 hrs	Oct 17	15%
4. <i>Final Paper / Project</i>	35 hrs	Oct 30	40%
Total =	121 hrs		

All assignments are due at 8pm **SK time**, unless otherwise indicated.

Course Outline

1. Introduction to the Prison Epistles
2. Colossians
3. Ephesians
4. Philemon
5. Philippians

*Chapel will be Wednesday, September 9 at 10:15am – 11:30am SK (12:15pm – 1:30pm ET)

- No assignments will be accepted after the course end date: **November 2, 2026**

Academic Policies

General Assignment Guidelines

Please see the [Horizon](#) & [MCS](#) Format Guide for assignment submission, grammar, and formatting guidelines. The length of papers should fall within +/- 10% of the stated length. Papers that fall outside the length guidelines may not be graded. Assignments should be submitted via Populi under *Submissions* (not *Comments*). The resource at this [link](#) explains how to submit assignments on Populi.

Late Assignments and Extensions

Please contact the professor well in advance if you would like to request an adjustment to any of your due dates. No extensions will be granted beyond the course end date unless approval is granted by Horizon's Assistant Academic Dean.

A late penalty will be assessed for all overdue assignments: 1-3 calendar days late, penalty of 10%; 4-6 calendar days late, penalty of 20%. After six days late, an assignment receives a grade of 0.

Grading

Grade	Percentage	GPA	Descriptor
A+	97-100%	4	Exceptional
A	93-96%	4	Excellent
A-	90-92%	3.7	Excellent
B+	87-89%	3.3	Good
B	83-86%	3.0	Good
B-	80-82%	2.7	Good
C+	77-79%	2.3	Satisfactory
C	73-76%	2.0	Satisfactory
C-	70-72%	1.7	Satisfactory
D+	67-69%	1.3	Minimal Pass
D	63-66%	1.0	Minimal Pass
D-	60-62%	0.7	Minimal Pass
F	<60%	0	Failure

Academic Integrity

Students learn best when practicing academic integrity. A lack of integrity is displayed in acts such as deception, abuse of confidentiality, cheating, inappropriate collaboration, or plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents the words or ideas of another person or an artificial intelligence (AI) tool in such a way as to give others the impression that it is their own words or ideas. In academic writing, there should be no doubt which words or ideas are the student's and which are drawn from other sources or AI. Students are expected to submit their own original work and give due recognition to sources from which all substantial phrases, sentences, or even ideas are drawn. Note also that you may not submit work done in one course to satisfy the requirements of another course (unless both instructors agree beforehand to accept such work). See [here](#) for examples of plagiarism and further guidelines in the [Student Handbook](#).

Horizon has a subscription to software that ensures the originality of academic writing, verifies the proper citation of all sources, and detects AI-generated content. When you submit an assignment, you will automatically receive a summary on Populi that includes your submitted files along with an originality score (a high originality score is positive).

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Usage

In keeping with the Academic Integrity policy above, students must disclose on the title page of all assignments whether or not they have used AI and how they have used it. If the assignment has no title page, the student must disclose this to the instructor by some other means, such as in a comment on Populi. Students are expected to follow the policy for acceptable use of AI that is published in the [Student Handbook](#).

Accessible Learning Services Information

Horizon is committed to provide safe and inclusive learning environments which equalize the opportunity for students with disabilities to meet the requirements of the institution, programs, and courses. The application for Academic Accommodations begins with a student disclosing a medical diagnosis or professionally documented learning disability during the application process. Enrolled students may contact Horizon's Academic Accommodations Coordinator, Richelle Bekkattla at rbekkattla@horizon.edu or library@horizon.edu. All Academic Accommodations will adhere to the Guiding Principles listed in the [Student Handbook](#). Students with documented accommodations on file pertaining to accessing course readings in alternate formats are encouraged to contact the librarian for assistance with as much advanced notice as possible.

Class Attendance

Students should attend all classes in order to facilitate competency development. Students are expected to be present through the delivery method that they registered for. Students registered to attend on-campus or via livestream must be present for the full duration of a class period to be marked as present for the class. Students registered to attend by VOD must submit their VOD reports on time to be marked as present for class. In the case of illness or other unforeseen circumstances, students may miss up to twenty percent of the total class time (e.g., one day of a module course, two 3-hour classes, etc.) without academic penalty. Students who are absent for more than this will automatically fail the course. Students wishing to be exempted from this policy due to extenuating circumstances may make an academic appeal, where they will need to document and verify those circumstances. Students who miss a class are responsible to get missed notes or handouts from another student, rather than from the professor.

Livestreaming Etiquette

Students taking the course through livestreaming are required to indicate this during their course registration. While livestreaming access is available for on-campus students who are unable to attend class due to illness, on-campus students are expected to attend class in person following the class attendance policy.

If attending class online via livestream, in order to be marked present for class, you must keep your camera on and stay present and attentive throughout the class session, extending the gift of full engagement. Access your class with a computer (preferably) or tablet, not a cell phone. Arrive to class on time, and dress as you would if you were attending class on campus. Join the class from a quiet space with minimal background noise, and mute your microphone until you wish to speak to the class.

Use of Technology

Horizon encourages the use of electronic devices in the classroom to enhance learning. Careful consideration must be given to privacy issues, copyrighted materials, and the general care and concern for others. Please respect the following classroom policies:

- Please use online access for course learning only. This is a matter of respect for the instructor's teaching, your own learning, and fellow students who may be distracted by other uses.

- Students should secure permission from the instructor to record any teaching material. This includes PowerPoint slides, white board illustrations, notes, and any form of audio or video.
- Student feedback is a valuable input for course improvements. Please resolve any classroom grievance about the instructor or course with the instructor personally, through the Horizon College and Seminary grievance procedures, or the Populi-based course evaluations. It is inappropriate to air classroom grievances on a social media platform.
- When instructors use recording mechanisms in the classroom, recorded materials will be used for the sole purpose of instruction (potentially including future online video courses) and cannot be released to any social media outlet without the written consent of the students whose images have been recorded.
- In general, it is not acceptable to share photographs or videos of students in the classroom setting without permission from those whose images appear in such media.

Library Support and Research Assistance

Library staff are available to meet with students (online or in person) who need assistance with

- citing sources and identifying credible resources;
- developing research and information literacy skills;
- searching DTL and other library resources.

Bibliography

Commentaries on Paul's Prison Epistles:

Kent, Homer A., et al. *Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary with the New International Version of the Holy Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.

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Commentaries on Ephesians:

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