

Weakness Rather Than Sin

The questions contained in this file are based on section four (pages 40—52) of the first chapter of *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles*.¹ Use them to guide your reading and review of this section before the upcoming exam.

1. Does Stendahl think Paul saw *weakness* as leading to *sin*? Why, or why not? (40—41; see also page 44)
2. In which chapter of which letter does Paul write about his “thorn in the flesh”? What does Stendahl think was the nature of that “thorn in the flesh”? (41—42).
3. What are the implications of Paul’s uncertainty about the nature of his mystical experiences? (page 41)
4. Paul says he requested “three times” that God remove his “thorn in the flesh.” What might be implied by this number? (page 42)
5. What two texts suggest that Paul expected to be alive at the time of Christ’s return? Read those texts. (page 42)
6. Where is the clearest reference to sickness as an obstacle to Paul’s ministry found? Read that text. (page 43)
7. How does Colossians 1:24 relate to the topic of Paul’s “weakness”? (page 44)
8. What does Stendahl think Paul meant by “we” in 2 Corinthians 4? What evidence does he cite to support his view? Why does Stendahl think this matters? (44—45)

In class, Dr. Palmer will present an alternative to Stendahl’s view of this issue. For the exam, you should know that more than one interpretation is possible. You should know the difference between “inclusive ‘we’” and “exclusive ‘we’” and understand what the ramifications are of these alternatives.

9. In which letter do most of Paul’s comments on his weakness appear? (page 46)
10. In which letter (and what chapters) does Paul speak of his weakness in order to contrast his ministry with that of the “super-apostles” who emphasize their strength? (46—47)
11. In which letter (and what chapters) does he contrast his weakness with the supposed knowledge and wisdom of others in the church? (page 47)

¹ Krister Stehdahl, *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), pages 1—77.

12. What does Stendahl mean by "the theology of the cross"? (47—48)
13. How is the way Paul uses the term *weakness* in the letter to the Romans different from the way he uses it in the Corinthian correspondence? (47—48)
14. What does Stendahl think about triumphalism (heroic faith)? (48—50)
15. Where does Paul think his weakness comes from? (50—51)