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NT 621 Exegesis of Romans

Ben Witherington

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NT 621

EXEGESIS OF ROMANS

Ben Witherington, III, Instructor
Study (Home): 859-223-6308

Spring 2004
Enrollment Limit:

60

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Catalog Description

A detailed exegesis of the entire book of Romans, examining the most commented on book in the NT in light of its historical, rhetorical, sociological, theological, and ethical contexts. Prerequisite: NT(IBS)510 or 511; NT520; and NT500 or 501/502 or equivalent. (May be taken by students in M.A. programs not requiring Greek by special arrangement with the professor.)

Introduction

Romans is the most commented on book of any kind from all of antiquity, and it is, along with Galatians, the book most responsible for spawning the Protestant reformation under Luther, Calvin, Wesley and others. Yet strangely this book has seldom been treated in the modern era from a non-Augustinian point of view. This course seeks to examine Romans in light of its various contexts and consider non-Calvinist readings by Chrysostom and others of this important book.

Course Objectives

Having successfully completed this course, participants should:

- (1) be able to recognize the importance of a close reading of the text of Romans
- (2) be able to begin to master the skills necessary to exegete the Greek text of this NT document;
- (3) grasp the importance of the rhetorical structure of this work and its importance for understanding Pauline thought;
- (4) understand the role of the this work in the New Testament canon;
- (5) be able to propose fruitful ways in which Romans may be read within the horizons of the contemporary church and world; understand the importance of Romans for the Wesleyan concepts of justification by grace through faith
- (6) to employ a range of exegetical approaches relevant to the interpretation of Romans and other NT letters
- (7) to be able to identify central issues in the critical study of Romans

- (8) to be able to articulate the central theological assumptions and presuppositions one brings to the interpretation of a book like Romans
- (9) to be able to critically assess commentaries and secondary literature, learning to distinguish between scholarly and devotional treatments of Romans
- (10) to be able to understand Romans in its social, historical, literary, and canonical contexts

Course Requirements and Reading

On questions of style, especially with regard to paper organization and references, see Carol Slade, Form and Style: Research Papers, Reports, Theses, 11th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

Students should submit written materials on time; late papers will receive no written comments and the grade will be penalized one-third of a grade per day.

(1) Class Preparation, Attendance, and Participation: Participants should prepare for each class session by (1) carefully reading the assigned texts in Romans (see the reading schedule, below), (2) taking notes on the text, and (3) comparing their observations with those in at least one of the following commentaries. (15%)

J.D.G. Dunn's two volume work in the Word Biblical Commentary Series, Romans 1-8, and Romans 9-16 (Dallas: Word, 1988).

D. Moo, The Epistle to the Romans, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

B. Witherington and D Hyatt, The Letter to the Romans, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003). Available February 15, 2004.

Attendance at all sessions of the course is expected. In order to complete the course with a passing grade, no more than two classes may be missed.

(2) A Critical Review: A comparison and contrast of two of the following works (your choice): K. Grieb's The Story of Romans. A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness, (Louisville: Westminster/J/ Knox, 2002); L.T. Johnson's Reading Romans, A Literary and Theological Commentary, (Macon: Smyth and Helwys, 2001); R. Morgan's Romans, in the NT Guides series (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995). D. Moo, Encountering the Book of Romans, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002); C. Bryan's A Preface to Romans: Notes on the Epistle and its Literary and Cultural Setting, (Oxford: O.U. Press, 2000); and K.P. Donfried, The Romans Debate 2nd ed. (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991).

This review should be approximately 1300-1600 words (i.e., 5-6 pages, with a standard 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins) in length, typed, double-spaced. Due at the beginning of the first class in March. As a critical review, this essay should summarize the authors central theses; demonstrate the author's approach to the subject matter; and critique the author's analysis (e.g., with regard to the author's method, its faithfulness to the primary materials, its engagement with the wider discussion on the topic, and so on). (35%)

(3) A Research Assignment: An exegesis paper of approximately 10 pages (with a standard 12-point font like Times New Roman and one-inch margins), typed, with 1.5 or double spacing, with appropriate notes and bibliography, treating a selected pericope of Romans. This paper should evidence *both* a close reading of the text *and* critical engagement with the range of secondary resources appropriate to the study. (See the bibliographic resources in the commentaries, as well as *New Testament Abstracts* in the Library.) Due by 4:00 April 1. (50%).

Reading Schedule

The student should plan to work through the commentaries as we progress through the course. You are expected to read both Dunn and Witherington/Hyatt, as well as Bryan's introductory volume. The latter should be read at the beginning of the course.

Course Schedule

Approximately one week will be spent on introductory matters then we will deal with the text working from Rom. 1 through Rom. 16. Because of the length of this work, we will be concentrating on selected passages.

Bibliography

There are now several resources one can turn to as guides for selecting commentaries and secondary literature for the preparation of research papers as well as for ministry. The best of these is D.R. Bauer, *An Annotated Guide to Biblical Resources for Ministry*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003).