

NT 2063 — EXEGESIS OF PAUL'S MAJOR LETTERS: GALATIANS IN ENGLISH

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Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
Louisville, Kentucky

The main purpose of this exegesis course is to read the text of Paul's letter to the Galatians carefully and with discernment. While a direct encounter with the text of the Epistle will set the itinerary for our work, we will explore critical issues in the interpretation of Galatians and consider prominent scholarly literature along the way. In addition to basic matters of historical-critical understanding of the text, we will reflect upon theological issues as these arise from our encounter with the letter. We will be particularly interested in the implications of Galatians for religious dialogue between Christians and Jews.

Course Requirements

1. Regular attendance and participation.
2. A reflection paper — due at the beginning of class on February 21.

Read Galatians several times in different translations from the one that you normally read. Try the New Jerusalem Bible, the New International Version, Today's New International Version, the Revised English Bible, the New Revised Standard Version, the New American Standard, the New King James Version, the Common English Bible — or one of the many other *translations*. Avoid *paraphrases*. By all means avoid so-called "study Bibles" with the prepackaged outlines and superimposed themes.

Once you believe you are familiar with Paul's letter, pretend you are a leading member of a church in Galatia and write a letter responding to Paul. You may take any approach you wish, so long as you engage in a substantive exchange focused on the concerns Paul identified or raised in his own letter. Please refer only to Galatians and pretend that you do not even know that Paul has written other letters to other congregations.

Your letter should be 1000 words at most, typewritten in 12-point font.

3. Preparation and presentation of two exegetical working papers (1000 words at most). For each class session one student will prepare a paper on the unit of text under consideration. Guidelines for these papers are given in the additional handout, "Guidelines for Exegetical Working Papers" (you may also find help in "Issues for

Exegetical Papers," which is included in this syllabus). These papers are to be distributed to the class no later than the end of the day on the day of the session ***preceding*** the discussion of the passage. *For example*, if your working exegetical paper focuses on Galatians 1:11-24, then, the paper should be distributed to the class no later than the end of the day on February 28th or if the paper focuses on Galatians 4:1-11, then, the paper should be distributed to the class no later than the end of the day on March 27th.

4. Finally, each student will engage in original exegesis of a text of her/his choice in order to produce a paper of approximately 4500-5000 words, not including any title page and bibliography. For matters of form consult K. L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*.
Due: May 11 by 5:00 p.m..

Grading

1. Attendance and preparation for the class, as indicated by cogent participation in the sessions will account for 20% of the final grade. Participation is not merely talking, but saying something germane that reveals careful preparation and engagement with the text and assignments.
2. The "letter to Paul" (due February 21st) will account 10% of the final grade.
3. The two brief exegetical working papers will account for 30% of the final grade (15% each).
4. The original research that will be presented in the final paper will account for 40% of the final grade (due May 11th by 5:00 p.m.).

**No late papers will be accepted.
No extensions can be given.
Plan accordingly.**

Books for the Course

Each student is required to have and read the appropriate materials in the following:

1. A Bible — any *translation* is acceptable.
2. C. B. Cousar, *Galatians*. Interpretation; Louisville: John Knox Press, 1982.
3. R. B. Hays, "The Letter to the Galatians" in L. E. Keck *et al.*, eds. *The New Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 11*. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

* In addition to these books there are several other, important and helpful volumes pertaining to Paul and Galatians available in the bookstore and library, particularly J. L. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1997 [hereafter, *TILP*]. We will use portions of Martyn's book throughout the semester.

SCHEDULE

For each class session students should read the relevant portion(s) of the epistle and the relevant portions of the commentaries. Other reading is encouraged (but not required): e.g., Consult G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, on important words in the passages; study important journal articles and monographs referred to in the bibliographies of the commentaries; read and reflect upon parallel passages in Paul's other letters and in other pertinent ancient literature.

Introductory Matters

February 9 Introduction to the Course — Its Focus, Goals, and Methods

Paul and Galatia

February 14 Survey of Paul's Life, World, Work, and Thought — Part 1

February 16 Survey of Paul's Life, World, Work, and Thought — Part 2

February 21 The Situation in Galatia and Paul's Apocalyptic Viewpoint

Assignment (for February 21): Read first two essays by J. L. Martyn in the bibliography; **your "letter to Paul" is due.**

Focus on Galatians

February 23 Identifying the Galatians and Paul's Opponents from the Letter Itself

Assignment: Read the introductory portions of your commentaries—and—study Galatians looking for clues to the identities of the Galatians and Paul's adversaries

Galatians 1 & 2 — Paul Confronts the Galatians

February 28 *Galatians 1:1-10*

March 1 *Galatians 1:11-24*

March 6 *Galatians 2:1-10*

March 8 *Galatians 2:11-21*

Galatians 3 — Law or Faith in the Light of the Promise to Abraham

March 13 *Galatians 3:1-14*

March 15 *Galatians 3:15-29*

March 27 Discussion of Key Theological Issues in Galatians 3

Assignment: Read Galatians 3 carefully, noting theological issues present and/or presented in the chapter.

Galatians 4 — Law or Faith in the Light of Logic and Sacred "History"

March 29 *Galatians 4:1-11*

April 3 *Galatians 4:12-20*

April 17 *Galatians 4:21-5:1*

April 19 Discussion of Paul's Exegetical Methods and the Authority of Scripture in Theological Reflection

Assignment: Read Galatians 3 & 4 and J. L. Martyn, "The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah," in J. T. Carroll *et al.* eds., *Faith and History. Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990) 160-92— and in *TILP* ch. 12, pp. 191-208.

Galatians 5 — Christian Life

April 24 *Galatians 5:1-12*

April 26 *Galatians 5:13-26*

Galatians 6 — Observations on Christian Living

May 1 *Galatians 6:1-10*

May 3 *Galatians 6:11-18*

Galatians and Theological Reflection: **Theology, Christology, Soteriology, Cosmos, Anthropology, Sin, Faith, Spirit, Law, Ecclesiology, and Ethics**

May 8 & 10 Discussion

Assignment: Read J. L. Martyn, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16," in W. R. Farmer et al., eds., *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967) 269-87—and in *TILP* ch. 6, pp. 89-110.

Final Exegesis Paper Due: 05/11/12—no later than 5:00 p.m.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- M. Bachmann, *Anti-Judaism in Galatian? Exegetical Studies on a Polemical Letter and on Paul's Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- J. M. G. Barclay, "Mirror-Reading a Polemical Letter: Galatians a Test Case," *JSNT* 31 (1987) 73-93.
- _____, *Obedying the Truth: Paul's Ethics in Galatians*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988.
- C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of Paul's Ethics in Galatians*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985.
- J. A. Bassler, ed., *Pauline Theology I: Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, Philemon*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.
- B. R. Braxton, *No Longer Slaves: Galatians and African American Experience*. Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier/Liturgical Press, 2002.
- A. A. Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2001.
- N. Elliott and M. Reasoner, *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011.
- G. D. Fee, *Galatians*. Blandford Forum, Dorset, UK: Deo Publishing, 2007.
- B. R. Gaventa, "Galatians 1 and 2: Autobiography as Paradigm," *NovT* 28 (1986) 309-26.
- R. B. Hays, "Christology and Ethics in Galatians: The Law of Christ," *CBQ* 49 (1987) 268-90.
- L. A. Jervis, *Galatians*. NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999.

G. Lyons, *Pauline Autobiography: Toward a New Understanding*. SBLDS 73; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985.

J. L. Martyn, "A Law-Observant Mission to the Gentiles: The Background of Galatians," *SJT* 38 (1985) 307-24 — and *TILP* ch. 1, pp. 7-24.

_____, "Apocalyptic Antinomies in Paul's Letter to the Galatians," *NTS* 31 (1985) 410-24 — and *TILP* ch. 7, pp. 111-23.

_____, "Epistemology at the Turn of the Ages: 2 Corinthians 5:16," in W. R. Farmer et al., eds., *Christian History and Interpretation: Studies Presented to John Knox*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967. Pp. 269-87 — and *TILP* ch. 6, pp. 89-110.

_____, "Paul and His Jewish-Christian Interpreters," *USQR* 42 (1988) 1-15 — and *TILP* ch. 3, pp. 37-45.

_____, "The Covenants of Hagar and Sarah," in J. T. Carroll et al., eds., *Faith and History. Essays in Honor of Paul W. Meyer*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990. Pp. 160-92 — and *TILP* ch. 12, pp. 191-208.

J. Riches, *Galatians Through the Centuries*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2008.

T. R. Schreiner, *Galatians*. ZECST 9; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010.

ISSUES FOR EXEGETICAL PAPERS

Broadly speaking, exegesis is the process of translating and interpreting a text; and it comprises four large concerns:

1. Determining the text — *What is the text? — (textual criticism).*
2. Translating the text — *How should the Greek be rendered?*
3. Analyzing the text — *What does the text say? — (interpretation).*
4. Summarizing or applying the text — *What is the significance? — (appropriation).*

These activities may be broken down further for the purposes of thorough "exegesis." Your exegetical paper will need to evince all four activities in some detail. In a final form, the paper should probably have these parts:

1. Your original translation of the text — or, the version of the text with which you have been primarily working.
2. An outline of the passage.
3. An overview of the exegetical problems for interpreting the text (the major portion of the paper).
4. A summary of the historical, ethical, or theological significance of the passage.

In doing the work, you may want to consider some of the following issues. But, be sure that you are attentive to the text. Let it set the agenda. Listen, then speak. Questions and considerations differ from one passage to another, and so, while there may be a finite number of questions which we are capable of posing in relation to the interpretation of the Bible, the combinations are nearly limitless; and you can determine which questions are appropriate only by considering the text. As S. E. McEvenue has said, "The fact is that method is nothing more than a description and systematization of acts of understanding . . . ultimately the researcher must simply stare at [the] text, or fumble with it, until acts of understanding begin to take place."

Translation (when applicable)

Vocabulary. What are the words?

Syntax. How are the words related in phrases, clauses, and sentences?

Grammar. How and how well does the linguistic system cohere?

Outline

Formal structure. Are there patterns in the text? Repetitions? Chiasms? Balanced clauses? Or, is the material some clear rhetorical form?

and/or

Logical structure. What is the line of thought, argument, or reasoning? What are the points? The illustrations of points?

Exegetical Considerations

Establishing the text (when applicable). The text we read is a critically established entity. Experts study scores of ancient manuscripts that are not always in agreement and make decisions about textual variants. Critical commentaries are very helpful here. It is crucial at least to recognize the presence of a "real" problem when it is there and to have some sense of the merits of the variants, even if you do not plan or want to become a text critic.

The text in its context. There is an old saying, "A text out of context means something, anything, and nothing." To understand the meaning of a text, it is necessary to understand where it appears in the whole document. What preceded the passage? What follows? How does the passage fit into its context? What is going on in the text in general? Why was the whole document written? What motivated the writing of the section in which the passage under consideration appears?

Determining the type of material, its form, and detecting traditional materials that the author employed or from which inspiration was drawn.

What kind of material are you dealing with?

Narrative? Epistle? Both — i.e., one within the other or a hybrid?

What does the passage do?

Narrate? Declare? Report? Summarize? Respond? Admonish?

Does the passage contain "traditional" material?

An OT quotation or allusion? Early Christian traditions? Liturgical material — hymn, confession, prayer, other?

What is the tone of the material?

Didactic? Humorous? Witty? Ironic? Hostile? Sarcastic?

How is the material constructed?

Are there rhetorical devices — midrash or peshet, allegory, diatribe/dialogical? Rhythm? "Poetic" arrangement?

What is the language of the passage? Are there crucial words or phrases? Consult concordances, NT and "theological" dictionaries, commentaries, and journal articles (use *New Testament Abstracts* to get at these). Remember, words have usage, not meaning. They *denote* in context of phrases, sentences, paragraphs, and the overall

context of one's thought. Beware of defining a word and then going about plugging that predetermined sense into every text you encounter that uses that word — sometimes this may work, but often not.

Considering similar texts. Often there are helpful "parallels" to the biblical passages in other literature, canonical and non-canonical — but contemporary to the text! Commentaries and lexica frequently point to these, and in annotated versions of the Bible there are usually cross-reference apparatuses. Are there similar texts in Paul? In the OT, apocrypha, or pseudepigrapha? The Dead Sea Scrolls? NT apocrypha? Apostolic fathers? Rabbinic literature? Hellenistic literature — philosophers, playwrights, historians — e.g., Plato, Epictetus, Philo, Lucian, Sophocles, Pliny the Younger, Josephus, Tacitus?

Significance

Strikingly there are two dimensions to this consideration and a number of different appreciations of the relation of the two: (1) what the text meant; and (2) what the text means.

1. *What the text meant.* Though not all scholars agree on the meaning of every text, one is more likely to find a consensus on what a text meant to its first readers than on what it should mean for Christians today. By examining and thinking about texts we can determine a range of POSSIBLE meanings that, in light of all factors, moves toward WHAT IS PROBABLE. In this area one may need to address theological, ethical, and historical concerns.

What understanding of God, Christ, the Spirit, or human existence does the passage evince? How would the content of the passage affect Christian living? How does the passage affect our understanding of early Christianity?

2. *What the text means.* The implications and importance of the text for modern ethical and theological considerations sometimes produces a parting of the ways among scholars, often because of denominational sensibilities. How does the passage speak to the Church today? What is your evaluation of the message? Do you have problems with the teaching or with the reaction of some person to the passage? How do you propose to deal with this?

Policy Statements Included on Syllabi

1. Use of Inclusive Language

In accordance with seminary policy, students are to use inclusive language in class discussions and in written and oral communication by using language representative of the whole human community in respect to gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, and physical and intellectual capacities. Direct quotations from theological texts and translations of the Bible do not have to be altered to conform to this policy. In your own writing, however, when referring to God, you are encouraged to use a variety of images and metaphors, reflecting the richness of the Bible's images for God. See for further assistance, http://www.lpts.edu/Academic_Resources/ASC/avoidinggenderbiasinlanguage.asp.

2. Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructors is expected to be the work of the student whose name appears on the assignment. Any borrowing of the ideas or the words of others must be acknowledged by quotation marks (where appropriate) and by citation of author and source. Use of another's language or ideas from online resources is included in this policy, and must be attributed to author and source of the work being cited. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism, and may result in failure of the course. Multiple occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues relating to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see The Code of Student Conduct, 6.11; the Student Handbook, p. 19.

3. Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center (kmapes@lpts.edu) during the first two weeks of a semester and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments. Students with environmental or other sensitivities that may affect their learning are also encouraged to speak with the instructor.

4. Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow the Seminary standard, which is based on these guides: Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th ed. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Copies of these guides are available at the library and in the Academic Support Center.

5. Attendance Policy

According to the Seminary catalog, students are expected to attend class meetings regularly. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class, either prior to the session or within 24 hours of the class session. Six or more absences (1/4 of the course) may result in a low or failing grade in the course.