

Advanced Exegesis of 2 Corinthians (NT 213-3)

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Spring 2011

Professor: Susan R. Garrett

Times: Wednesdays and Fridays, 10:00–11:30 a.m.

Course Description

Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians is a theologically rich and historically fascinating epistle, with profound implications for what it means to live as a Christian in the twenty-first century. Yet, the letter remains less well known in the church and less appreciated than the other three "great epistles" of Paul (i.e., Romans, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians). The course will enable students to become familiar with the content of 2 Corinthians, to work through its various interpretive challenges, and to formulate their own constructive ideas about the relevance and possible applications of the epistle for the church today. The usual format for class sessions will be a brief period of reading and discussion of the Greek text, followed by general discussion. Students are expected to participate in an informed and energetic way and to present one short in-class presentation; the instructor will from time to time provide overview and summary.

Intended Major Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, each student will be able to:

1. State the major theories for 2 Corinthians' literary integrity (or lack thereof), rhetorical structure, and historical context.
2. Identify and discuss important themes in the letter and relate them to patterns of Pauline theology and rhetoric seen elsewhere in the Pauline epistles.
3. Use available electronic and/or print resources to analyze and evaluate published translations of the Greek text of 2 Corinthians and to prepare effective word studies.
4. Offer detailed exegetical analysis of passages from 2 Corinthians, using the Greek text along with English translations and other appropriate resources.
5. Speak cogently about ways to preach or teach from 2 Corinthians in order to benefit the church.

Course Requirements:

1. Regular class attendance and active and informed participation. For each class session, the student should prepare to read and discuss the Greek text of an assigned passage (*this will be shorter than the passage assigned for general preparation*). Further, the student should read the larger assigned passage in English along with commentary entries and any additional readings designated in the syllabus, paying special attention to guide-questions that have been provided there. *Worth @20% of final grade.*
2. A take-home assignment on historical critical issues in the study of 2 Corinthians. *See intended learning outcome #1 above. Worth @10%. **Due March 30.***
3. An in-class presentation (with accompanying handout) on a central theme of 2 Corinthians, selected in consultation with the professor. May be done in connection with an exegesis paper. *See intended learning outcome #2 above. Worth @10%. **Dates for presentations will vary.***

4. Completion of several take-home Greek assignments. *See intended learning outcome #3 above. Worth @10% in total. Due February 23, March 9, April 1, and April 29.*
5. Three short exegesis papers (@ 6-8 pages each). Each paper should conclude with reflections on how one might preach from the passage to an audience of one's choosing. *See intended learning outcome #'s 4 and 5 above. For more information on papers, see below. Worth @50% in total. Due March 16, April 27, and May 18.*

Textbooks

One or more of the following:

1. Furnish, Victor P. *II Corinthians*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1984.
2. Minor, Mitzi L. *2 Corinthians*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2009.
3. Sampley, J. Paul. "The Second Letter to the Corinthians." In *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. XI. Nashville: Abingdon, 2000.

Other readings available on CAMS. See Bibliography at the end of the syllabus for details on where to find each reading.

Guidelines for Exegesis Papers

- Sign up for one text for exegesis from each group. No two students should select the same pericope.
- Papers should be about 6-8 double-spaced pages in length, including notes and bibliography.
- Each paper should conclude with a brief (1 or 2 paragraph) statement of key points that you would emphasize if you were preaching on this pericope.
- At the end of the semester, students will re-submit all papers electronically, in single-spaced format. They will be collected and distributed (electronically) to class members, for future use as a resource for ministry.

Group A – Due March 16

1:3-7 _____ 1:15-22 _____ 2:14-17 _____
 3:1-6 _____ 4:1-6 _____ 4:7-12 _____
 4:13-18 _____

Group B – Due April 27

5:1-5 _____ 5:11-15 _____ 5:16-21 _____
 6:3-13 _____ 6:14-7:1 _____ 7:5-13 _____
 8:8-15 _____ 9:6-15 _____

Group C – Due May 18

10:1-6 _____ 10:7-12 _____ 10:13-18 _____
 11:1-6 _____ 11:7-15 _____ 11:30-33 _____
 12:7-10 _____ 12:19-21 _____ 13:1-4 _____
 13:5-10 _____

Schedule

February 11. Orientation to class. Studying Paul. Complexities in the study of 2 Corinthians. *Required reading:* 1-2 Corinthians; Johnson, *The New Testament: A Very Short Introduction*, 60-83; Introduction to Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Martin, *Slavery As Salvation*, 136-46.

- ☐ How would you characterize Paul's relationship to this church as of the time of his composition of 1 Corinthians?
- ☐ Why do many scholars suppose that 2 Corinthians as we know it is a composite letter? What literary evidence is there to support such a theory? What arguments can be made in defense of the letter's unity? *Come prepared to discuss.*

February 16. Weak in Greek? Translation strategies. Setting goals and strategies for advancing your ability to work with the Greek text.

February 18. Word studies: How to do them and what tools to use. *Required reading:* Gorman, *Elements of Biblical Exegesis*, 96-106.

February 23. Sufferings and consolation. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 1:1-14; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 307-10.

- ☐ Notice the repeated use of *para,klhsiō* ("comfort," noun) and *parakale,w* ("comfort," verb) in Paul's opening sentences. Do a quick word study (use a lexicon and concordance, or *Bibleworks*) on these words. Why is Paul stressing this theme of mutual "comfort" so heavily at the outset of his letter? ***Word study to be handed in. Should not exceed one page in length.***
- ☐ What basis does Paul think that the Corinthians have for being proud of him, and he of them (1:14)?

February 25. The "letter of tears." *Required reading:* 2 Cor 1:15–2:13; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 310-12.

- ☐ In 2:4 Paul mentions his having written to the Corinthians "out of much distress and

anguish of heart and with many tears” (NRSV). What circumstances seem to have prompted this (lost) letter, and how did the Corinthians react to it? Why is Paul on the defensive about it now?

□ Why does the change that Paul made in his travel plans seem to be such a big issue?

March 2. Ministers of the new covenant. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 2:14–3:6; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 312-314.

□ Why in 2:14-17 does Paul portray himself as a captive led in a triumphal procession? Who has triumphed here, and over what? Use a concordance or *Bibleworks* to find other places where Paul refers to the “saved” (oi` sw|zo,menoi) vs. the “perishing” (oi` avpollu,menoi). Do any of these other passages shed light on the division Paul makes in v. 16, between those who smell on Paul the aroma of life and those who smell the stench of death? How does the apparently defensive comment in v. 17 fit into the flow of the passage?

□ Why does Paul tell the Corinthians that *they* are his “letter of recommendation?” What might this mean? Why is he even concerned about a “letter of recommendation?”

March 4. No class.

March 9. Veiled glory. **Required readings:** 2 Cor 3:7-18; Wright, *Climax of the Covenant*, 175-92.

□ Why does Paul call God’s covenant with Moses the “ministry of death” (diakoni,a tou/ qana,tou) and “of judgment” (tou/ katakri,sewj)? What does he mean when he refers to “the end of the glory that was being set aside” (v. 13: to. te,loj tou/ katargoume,nou)? *The article by N. T. Wright will help you with these questions.*

□ Do a quick word study (use a lexicon and concordance, or *Bibleworks*) on do,xa, especially as it is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians. Why is Paul emphasizing this motif so heavily in 3:1–4:6? **Word study to be handed in. Should not exceed one page in length.**

□ What phenomenon or facet of Christian life is Paul referring to when he says that we are “beholding the glory of the Lord” (3:18), and are being changed “from glory unto glory?”

March 11. Treasure in earthen vessels: the endurance of hardships. *Required reading:* Dio Chrysostom, *Oration* 8; Malherbe, *Moral Exhortation*, 141-43 (contains Epictetus, *Discourse* 3.22.50-61); Hodgson, “Paul the Apostle and First Century Tribulation Lists”; 59-69; Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel*, 47-59, 148-57.

March 16. Treasure in clay jars. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 4:1-18; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 314-15; Garrett, “The God of this World.” **First paper due.**

□ Who are “the perishing” and “the unbelievers” to whom Paul refers in 4:3-4? Must

these necessarily be non-Christians? Justify your answer from the text.

□ (1) What *theological* point is made by Paul's listing of his hardships in 4:7-12? (2) What *rhetorical* points are being made? (In other words, how does Paul's listing of his hardships contribute constructively to his argument or self-presentation?)

March 18. At home in the body = away from the Lord? *Required reading:* 2 Cor 5:1-10; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 315-16; Garrett, *No Ordinary Angel*, 194-99.

□ Note that Paul mixes metaphors in 5:1-5, switching between "building" or "house" imagery and "clothing" imagery. Explain what he is talking about here. To what does "being naked" in vv. 3-4 refer?

□ Note that in 5:10 Paul refers to our being "before the judgment seat of Christ" where we will "receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil." How can this assertion be reconciled with a theology that says we are saved by faith alone, not by works? Where else in Paul's letters does he refer to Christians being judged?

March 23 and 25: No class. Research & Study.

March 30. The Ministry of Reconciliation. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 5:11-21; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 316; Garrett, "New Creation." *Take-home assignment due.*

□ Explain the force of the *ou-n* ("therefore") in v. 11. In other words, how does what Paul is saying in vv. 11ff. follow as a consequence of what he has said in the preceding verses?

□ Do quick word studies on the words *evxe,sthmen* (we are "beside ourselves") and *swfronou/men* (we are "in our right mind") in v. 13. Do you think someone has accused Paul of being "beside himself" (i.e., "out of his mind")? Why does he bring this up?

□ Do a quick word study on *sune,cei* v. 14. Is the NRSV's rendering ("for the love of Christ *urges us on*") a good one? Why or why not?

□ Be able to elaborate on v. 17, based on Paul's discussions elsewhere in his epistles of a "new creation" or related concepts. The marginal references in Nestle-Aland will be helpful here, as will the article "New Creation."

□ Note that 5:21 is an extremely "packed" verse. Read it in Greek, and be able to elaborate on the meaning of each clause, based on evidence concerning Paul's soteriology from elsewhere in his letters.

April 1. "Now is the acceptable time." *Required reading:* 2 Cor 6:1-13; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 316-17.

□ Compare the Greek text of 2 Cor 6:11 to published translations. Note that the Greek states literally, "Our mouth is open to you Corinthians," but the NRSV renders this as

“we have spoken frankly to you.” The translators thereby pick up on the reference and allusions to *parrhsi,a* (“boldness of speech”) earlier in the letter. Do you think this is a fair move by the translators? Why would Paul want to evoke the notion of *parrhsi,a* at this point in the letter? *Comparison of Greek texts to published translations to be handed in.*

☐ How does Paul’s appeal to the Corinthians to be reconciled to him cohere with the themes of the preceding paragraphs?

April 6. A possible non-Pauline interpolation. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 6:14–7:1; 2:11; 4:4ff.; 11:13ff; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 317-18; Rensberger, “2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1.”

☐ Be able to summarize the evidence for and against the theory that 6:14–7:1 is an interpolation from a non-Pauline source. What is your opinion?

☐ Consider the overview of Paul’s view of Satan given in Garrett, “The God of this World.” How does the reference to Beliar in 2 Cor 6:15 fit into the larger Pauline view? Does the reference to Beliar seem continuous or discontinuous with what Paul says about Satan elsewhere in 2 Corinthians?

April 8. Godly grief. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 7:2-16; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 318; Fredrickson, *Paul’s Bold Speech*, 293-313.

☐ How does this section cohere thematically with 1:23–2:4? With 6:11-13? In 7:2-16 how does Paul justify or rationalize the pain he caused the congregation with his “letter of tears?”

☐ Note that the topic of “comfort” (*para,klhsiō*) comes up again in this section of the epistle (vv. 4, 7, 13: now translated as “consolation” by the NRSV). Is this the same sort of “comfort” to which Paul made repeated reference in chapter 1? Does the context in which he speaks of “comfort” here shed any light back on the references in chapter 1?

☐ What do you make of the difference that Paul posits in v. 10 between “godly grief” (*h` . kata. qeo.n lu,ph*) and “worldly grief” (*h` . tou/ ko,smou lu,ph*)? How does Fredrickson account for this set of oppositions? Why does Paul think that the “godly grief” was, in the final analysis, a good thing?

April 13 and 15: No class. *Attend events featuring Luke Timothy Johnson! Attend events of the presidential inauguration!*

April 20. Money issues. *Required reading:* 1 Cor 16:1-9; 2 Cor 8:1-24; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 318-20.

☐ Does Paul’s discussion of the collection in 1 Cor 16:1-9 give any insight to the congregational dynamics behind the discussion in 1 Corinthians 8?

❑ Elaborate on 8:9, based on your knowledge of Paul's christology as expressed elsewhere in his epistles. (*Hint: The marginal references in Nestle-Aland will be some help here.*) How does the presupposed christology support the arguments about "equality" (ivso,thj) in 8:13-15?

April 22: No class. Happy Easter!

April 27. Money issues (continued). *Required reading:* 2 Cor 9:1-15; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 320-21. ***Second paper due.***

- ❑ How have scholars accounted for the seeming redundancy of 9:1ff? How do you yourself think this "redundance" is best explained?
- ❑ Describe in your own words the "theology of giving" that Paul spells out in 9:6-15. How and why does Paul see the Corinthians' response to his appeal as a "test" (dokimh,) of their service (9:13)? How does this test relate to other tests of which Paul speaks in 2 Corinthians? (Hint: search on dokimh, and dokima,zw.)

April 29. Weighty letters, weak speech. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 10:1-18; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 321-24; Forbes, "Comparison, Self-Praise and Irony."

- ❑ How are the expressions "according to the flesh" (kata. sa,rka [NRSV: "according to human standards"]) and "in the flesh" (evn sarki, [NRSV: "as human beings"]) functioning in 10:1-4? What is the "warfare" of which Paul speaks in these verses?
- ❑ Do a quick word study on "boast" (kauca,omai, kau,chma, kau,chsij) in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Why might Paul feel it appropriate to boast here, when in general he seems opposed to boasting? In v. 13, what does he mean about "not boasting beyond limits" and "keeping within the field that God has assigned?" ***Word study to be handed in. Should not exceed one page in length.***

May 4. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 11:1-33; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 324-27.

- ❑ Why does Paul introduce his words in chapter 11 by claiming to indulge in "a little foolishness" (mikro,n ti avfrosu,nhj)? Presumably the irony of his ensuing remarks was meant to soften or render acceptable Paul's comparison of himself to the "super apostles" (note his condemnation of such comparisons in 10:12!). Do you think his strategy "worked?" Why or why not?
- ❑ What are the charges against which Paul defends himself in this section? What countercharges does Paul level against the "super apostles"?

May 6. Power perfected in weakness. *Required reading:* 2 Cor 12:1-10; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 327; Garrett, "Paul's Thorn."

- ❑ How does the passage about Paul's "thorn in the flesh" and Jesus' response to Paul's prayer (12:7-10) cap off the argument being made since 10:1?
- ❑ Why do you think Paul refers to himself in the third person?
- ❑ What does Paul mean by *h' ga.r du,namij evn avsqenei/a| telei/tai*? What relevance does this assertion have for Christian life today?

May 11. Test yourselves! *Required reading:* 2 Cor 12:11–13:13; Furnish, Sampley, or Minor; Nave, 327-29.

- ❑ Consider 12:20-21. Paul's worries about what he will find among the Corinthians are clear enough: quarreling, jealousy, anger, etc. (v. 20). But what does he mean when he says he fears that *they* may find *him* "not as they wish?" And that God may "humble him before them?"
- ❑ What is the substance of the threat that Paul makes in 13:1-4 and 13:10?
- ❑ Consider the words "examine" (*peira,zein*) and "test" (*dokima,zein*) used in 13:5. Where else in his writings does Paul speak of "testing oneself?" Why, in general, should one engage in such activity, and why does Paul think the Corinthians are in especially dire need of self-testing?

May 13. Preaching 2 Corinthians. *In this session, as a starting point for discussion, students will each discuss one of their exegesis papers, focusing on the homiletic application.*

May 18. *Third paper due.*

Bibliography

- Fitzgerald, John T. *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel: An Examination of the Catalogues of Hardships in the Corinthian Correspondence*. Atlanta: Scholars Press. 1988. Pp. 47-59, 148-57. **CAMS.**
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- Garrett, Susan R. "The God of this World and the Affliction of Paul: 2 Cor 4:1-12." In *Greeks, Romans, and Christians*. Edited by David Balch et al. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1990. Pp. 99-117. **CAMS.**

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- Minor, Mitzi L. *2 Corinthians*. Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 2009. **RESERVE.**
- Nave, Guy. "2 Corinthians." *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary*. Edited by Brian K. Blount. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007. Pp. 307-32. **CAMS.**
- Rensberger, David. "2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1—A Fresh Examination." *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 8 (1978): 25-49. **CAMS.**
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- Wright, N. T. *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. 1991. Pp. 175-92. **CAMS.**

APPENDIX

Policy on Inclusive Language:

In speech and in written assignments, please avoid divisive terms that reinforce stereotypes or are pejorative. Do not use language that leaves out part of the population, perpetuates stereotyping, or diminishes importance. Do not use male pronouns (such as “men”) to refer to a group that includes females as well. Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary.

Policy on Plagiarism

Be careful to document fully any information included in your papers that is not original. Also be aware that when you summarize information, even when you give the complete documentation information, your summaries should be in *your words* and not retain too much of the original author’s wording. A paper that presents the ideas or writing of someone else (including ideas from a Web site) as if they were your own is considered plagiarism, and school and departmental policies on academic honesty will be followed. Consult the Academic Support Center for additional guidance if necessary. In citations of other people’s work, students should follow the format outlined in Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (6th ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996; or 7th ed., 2007).