

## **NT 2063: Exegesis of Paul's Shorter Letters: Philippians & Philemon**

Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, J-Term 2023

Professor: Dr. Susan R. Garrett

Dates: January 9–13 and 17–20

Meeting Times: 4:30–6:00 p.m. and 6:30–7:30 p.m.

### **Course Description**

Philemon and Philippians—two of the letters that the Apostle Paul wrote while in prison—are short but potent. In the course we will read both letters closely, attending to Paul's pastoral method in light of his and his correspondents' historical, theological, and cultural contexts.

*Philemon* is a masterwork in careful persuasive technique, aimed at convincing a reluctant slave owner to “do the right thing.” In the U.S. before the Civil War, slave owners used *Philemon* to argue for the necessity of returning “runaway” enslaved persons to their masters, yet recent research suggests that such usage was based on a gross misreading of the letter. In the course we will consider this history of misuse even as we seek more liberative ways of reading *Philemon*.

*Philippians* is often seen as an “epistle of joy,” and indeed it is—yet here, too, Paul writes with definite ideas about what this beloved congregation needs to do differently. Paul perceives both internal and external threats to the Philippian church's thriving: conflict on the inside and “enemies of the cross of Christ” on the outside. He strives to show faithful people who find themselves living in this threatened space how to produce “the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God” (1:11).

### **Intended Major Course Learning Outcomes**

The course aims to meet MDiv student learning outcome #1 (“Students will gain knowledge and understanding of the Bible, and the ability to use critical skills and educated imagination to interpret it in contemporary social and cultural contexts”) and #5 (“Students will acquire the knowledge and skill sets necessary for the practice of Christian ministry,” with specific attention to preaching and teaching); and MAR student learning outcome #1 (“Students will be able to interpret Scripture critically and imaginatively”).

More specifically, upon completion of the course, each student will be able to:

- (1) Use appropriate scholarly tools to “scope out the lay of the land” for a particular biblical book (i.e., to gain a quick but sure grasp of the letter's major interpretive issues as discerned by scholars);
- (2) Engage in contextual studies of Greek words in the texts of *Philemon* and *Philippians*, identifying ranges of semantic possibilities for the words in question and making a fresh

assessment of evidence for different translational options [no prior knowledge of Greek is necessary];

- (3) Describe major historical, theological, and cultural (including literary/rhetorical) factors that impinge on our interpretation of Philemon and Philippians;
- (4) Demonstrate capacity to preach or teach from Philemon and Philippians in ways that reflect careful textual study while staying true to the student's own tradition and vocation.

### **Required textbooks:**

Brogdon, Lewis, and Marion L. Soards. *A Companion to Philemon*. Cascade Companions.

Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-4982-9099-9. Call #: BS 2765.53 .B7 2018. [Paper \$21.00; Kindle \$9.99]

Migliore, Daniel L. *Philippians and Philemon*. First edition. *Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014. ISBN:

978-0-664-23263-4. URL for LPTS eBook: <https://tinyurl.com/4e35hwh3>. [Paper \$33.43; Kindle \$16.99]

Osiek, Carolyn. *Philippians, Philemon*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville, Tenn:

Abingdon Press, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-687-05822-8. [Paper \$25.99; Kindle \$24.69; used copies readily available.] *To access eBook: (1) Go to <https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/oclc/42021415>. (2) Click on "View eBook." (3) Click on "Research Library" (somewhere in upper right-hand corner). (4) Click on "Biblical Commentaries," then "New Testament," then "Philippians." You may need to use the arrows at the bottom to scroll to the first page.*

### **Requirements and Assignments**

- (1) **Attendance and Participation.** Perfect or near-perfect class attendance and informed engagement in the class conversation (with cameras turned on except for brief periods when there are extenuating circumstances). Students should come to class with notes on readings and with questions in mind for discussion. *Worth 20% of the final grade.*
- (2) **Summaries of Critical Approaches to Letters.** A summary of approximately one double-spaced page in length for each letter under study, listing key scholarly findings on the circumstances of its writing and major interpretive issues. This summary should be submitted (uploaded through Canvas) by 3:00 p.m. on January 10 for Philemon and January 13 for Philippians. *Each worth 10%, for a total value of 20% of the final grade. See schedule below for more details. A rubric will be available on Canvas.*

- (3) **Word Studies.** Two word studies using the Contexticon online research tool. The word study for Philemon is due on January 12 and the word study for Philippians is due on January 19. You will submit your written study through Canvas by class time on each of those dates, and also lead the class through your findings during those class sessions. Use of the Contexticon will be explained on the first day of class, and more information on the word study assignment will be provided at that time. *Each word study is worth 15%, for a total value of 30% of the final grade. A rubric for the word studies will be available on Canvas.*
- (4) **Exegesis Paper.** A 6-8 page exegesis paper (bibliography and notes additional) on a passage of the student's choice from Philemon or Philippians. The paper should identify historical, theological, and literary or rhetorical factors pertinent to understanding the passage. One full page of the body of the paper should discuss the theological or pastoral relevance of the passage for the student's own church tradition (or specific congregation). *A rubric will be available on Canvas. You should select a passage from Philemon or Philippians (in consultation with the professor) by January 13. Students may (but are not required to) submit a first draft for critique in advance of their final submission; if this option is chosen, the draft must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on January 27. The final draft of the paper is due at 5:00 p.m. on February 3. Worth 30% of the final grade.*

### Schedule

**January 9.** Orientation to the Course. Why Philemon and Philippians (and why start with Philemon)? Introduction to the Contexticon.

*Preparation:*

- Read through Philemon and Philippians
- **Summary of Critical Approaches to Philemon:** Using at least 3 resources from Appendix 2, prepare a **1-page summary** of key exegetical issues (historical, theological, literary, rhetorical, etc.) for Philemon. You may also consult the introductions to the letter in a critical study Bible (such as the Oxford Annotated Bible) or the introductions in the assigned textbooks. *See Appendix 2 for suggested resources. A rubric will be available on Canvas. Paper should be submitted by 3:00 p.m. on January 10.*

**January 10.** Historical and contextual issues in the study of Philemon.

*Preparation:*

- Read Brogdon, from the beginning of the book (including the Forward, by LPTS professor *emeritus* Dr. Marion Soards) through the end of chapter 2. Jot down a few thoughts in response to the discussion questions at the end of each chapter.
- Read Osiek, 125-31
- Read Migliore, 189-200

**January 11.** A close reading of Philemon.

*Preparation:*

- Re-read Philemon
- Read Brogdon, chapter 3. Jot down a few thoughts in response to the discussion questions at the end of the chapter.
- In the Contexticon, navigate to Philemon v. 6, and click on the word *koinonia* (translated by the NRSV as “sharing”). Study the range-of-usage screen and other uses of this word in the Pauline letters. We will discuss whether we think the evidence supports Brogdon’s interpretation of this word in Philemon.
- Read Osiek, 133-46. How do you think Brogdon would assess Osiek’s reading of Philemon?
- Read Migliore, 201-48. How do you think Brogdon would assess Migliore’s reading of Philemon?

**January 12.** How should the letter to Philemon shape the mission of the church today?

*Preparation:*

- Read Brogdon, chapter 4. Jot down a few thoughts in response to the discussion questions at the end of the chapter.
- **Word Study** (Philemon): Using the Contexticon, prepare a **word study** on the word from Philemon assigned to you at the beginning of the course. You will submit your findings by 3:00 p.m. on January 12 and present them to the class that day (a 15-minute presentation, including discussion). *A rubric will be available on Canvas.*

**January 13.** Introduction to Philippians. Philippians 1:1-11.

*Preparation:*

- Re-read Philippians.
- **Summary of Critical Approaches to Philippians:** Using at least 3 resources from Appendix 2, prepare a **1-page summary** of key exegetical issues (historical, theological, literary, rhetorical, etc.) for Philippians. You may also consult the introductions to the letter in a critical study Bible (such as the Oxford Annotated Bible) or the introductions in the assigned textbooks. *See Appendix 2 for suggested resources. A rubric will be available on Canvas. Paper should be submitted by 3:00 p.m. on January 13.*
- Read Osiek, 15-38
- Read Migliore, 1-44

**January 16. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. No Class.**

**January 17.** Paul’s imprisonment. The Christ-hymn. Philippians 1:12–2:30.

*Preparation:*

- Study Philippians 1:12–2:30
- Read Osiek, 38-79

**January 18:** The Christ-hymn in context.

*Preparation:*

- Read Migliore, 45-115.
- Reflect (jotting down a few notes) on whether/how your understanding of what Paul was doing in the letter to Philemon bears on your interpretation of the meaning of the Christ-hymn for today.

**January 19.** Confronting opponents. Philippians 3:1–4:1.

*Preparation:*

- Read Osiek, 79-109
- Read Migliore, 116-153
- **Word Study** (Philippians): Using the Contexticon, prepare a **word study** on the word from Philippians assigned to you at the beginning of the course. You will submit your findings by 3:00 p.m. on January 19 and present them to the class that day (a 15-minute presentation, including discussion). *A rubric will be available on Canvas.*

**January 20.** Thanksgiving and final exhortations. Philippians 4:2-23.

*Preparation:*

- Read Osiek, 109-24
- Read Migliore, 154-184
- Be prepared to discuss your choice of a passage for your exegesis paper with the class. We will spend 20 minutes “workshopping” each student’s passage, as a way to help you jumpstart your work on the paper.

## **Appendix 1: Course Policies**

### 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. More discussion about inclusive language can be accessed from the Academic Support Center and from the section of the LPTS web site on “Inclusive and Expansive Language” (see [here](#)).

### Academic Honesty

All work turned in to the instructor 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. Two occurrences of plagiarism may result in dismissal from the Seminary. Students unfamiliar with issues related to academic honesty can find help from the staff in the Academic Support Center. For the Seminary policy, see the Policy for Academic Honesty in the Student Handbook.

### Special Accommodations

Students requiring accommodations for a documented physical or learning disability should be in contact with the Director of the Academic Support Center before the January term begins, and should speak with the instructor as soon as possible to arrange appropriate adjustments.

### Citation Policy

Citations in your papers should follow Seminary standards, which are based on these guides:

American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 6th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2010.

Turabian, Kate L., Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams. *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations: Chicago Style for Students and Researchers*. 9th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

*The Chicago Manual of Style*. 17th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.

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

### Attendance Policy

Perfect or near-perfect attendance is expected. In case of illness or emergency, students are asked to notify the instructor of their planned absence from class prior to the session. Whether excused or unexcused, absence will affect the "attendance and participation" component of the student's grade, and more than two absences may result in a low or failing grade in the course.

### Policy on Late Papers and Exams, and on Incompletes

Out of fairness to other students, papers turned in after the time and date specified in the syllabus will receive a grade penalty. Schedule of penalties: 1 minute to 24 hours late = 1 letter-grade deduction; 24 to 48 hours late = 2 letter-grade deduction. Papers more than 48 hours late will not be accepted. Grades of incomplete for the course will be permitted only in extreme circumstances, and must be arranged by the date specified by the registrar's office.

## Appendix 2: Suggested General Resources for Bible Study

### Bible Dictionaries

Browning, W. R. F. 2009. *A Dictionary of the Bible*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Achtemeier, Paul J., and Roger S. Boraas. 1996. *The HarperCollins Bible Dictionary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Freedman, David Noel. 1992. *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*. New York: Doubleday. 6 vols.  
**IN REFERENCE ROOM. Ref. BS 440 .A54 1992**

Freedman, David Noel, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck. 2000. *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. **IN REFERENCE ROOM. Ref. BS 440 .E44 2000**

Green, Joel B., Scot McKnight, and I. Howard Marshall. 1992. *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press. **IN REFERENCE ROOM. Ref. BS 2555.2 .D53 1992**

Sakenfeld, Katharine Doob. 2006. *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 5 vols. **IN REFERENCE ROOM. Ref. BS 440 .N445 2006**

### One-Volume Commentaries

Dunn, James D. G., and J. W. Rogerson. 2003. *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans. **IN REFERENCE ROOM. Ref. BS 491.3 .E37 2003**

Mays, James Luther, and Joseph Blenkinsopp. 2000. *The HarperCollins Bible commentary*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

### Introductory Textbooks

Achtemeier, Paul J., Joel B. Green, and Marianne Meye Thompson. 2001. *Introducing the New Testament: Its Literature and Theology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Pub.

Brown, Raymond Edward. 1997. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday.

Johnson, Luke Timothy. 2010. *The Writings of the New Testament: An Interpretation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press. (This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition; the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> editions are acceptable.)

### **Appendix 3: Suggested Books on Philemon and Philippians**

Brogdon, Lewis, and Marion L. Soards. *A Companion to Philemon*. Cascade Companions. Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018. ISBN: 978-1-4982-9099-9. Call #: BS 2765.53 .B7 2018. [Paper \$21.00; Kindle \$9.99]

Campbell, Cynthia McCall, and Eva Stimson. *Philippians*. First edition. Six Themes Everyone Should Know. Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-57153-241-1. Call #: BS 2705.52 .C35 2020.

Cousar, Charles B. *Philippians and Philemon: A Commentary*. 1st ed. New Testament Library. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-664-22122-5. Call #: Ref. BS 2341.2 .N49 v. 11.

Craddock, Fred. *Philippians: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Westminster John Knox Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-664-23883-4. URL for LPTS eBook: <https://tinyurl.com/4dzdcp4a> .

Johnson, Matthew V., James A. Noel, and Demetrius K. Williams, eds. *Onesimus, Our Brother: Reading Religion, Race, and Culture in Philemon*. Paul in Critical Contexts. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012. ISBN: 978-0-8006-6341-4. Call #: BS 2765.52 .O54 2012.

Migliore, Daniel L. *Philippians and Philemon*. First edition. Belief: A Theological Commentary on the Bible. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014. ISBN: 978-0-664-23263-4. URL for LPTS eBook: <https://tinyurl.com/4e35hwh3>. [Paper \$33.43; Kindle \$16.99]

Novakovic, Lidija. *Philippians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*. Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament. Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1481307710. Call #: BS 2705.52 .N68 2020.

Osiek, Carolyn. *Philippians, Philemon*. Abingdon New Testament Commentaries. Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon Press, 2000. ISBN: 978-0-687-05822-8. To access eBook: (1) Go to <https://lpts.on.worldcat.org/oclc/42021415>. (2) Click on "View eBook." (3) Click on "Research Library" (somewhere in upper right-hand corner). (4) Click on "Biblical Commentaries," then "New Testament," then "Philippians." You may need to use the arrows at the bottom to scroll to the first page. [Paper \$25.99; Kindle \$24.69; used copies readily available.]

Still, Todd D. *Philippians & Philemon*. The Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, v. 27b. Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2011. ISBN: 978-1-57312-084-5. URL for LPTS eBook: <https://tinyurl.com/2ej55zrt>.

Tamez, Elsa, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and Alicia J. Batten, eds. *Philippians*. Wisdom Commentary, Volume 51. Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, a Michael Glazier Book, 2017. ISBN: 978-0-8146-8200-5. Call #: BS 2705.53 .P45 2017.

Thompson, James, and Bruce W. Longenecker. *Philippians and Philemon*. Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2016. ISBN: 978-0-8010-3339-1. Call #: BS 2705.53 .T46 2016. [Paper \$33.85; Kindle \$30.00]

Thurston, Bonnie Bowman, Judith Ryan, and Daniel J. Harrington. *Philippians and Philemon*. Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2009. ISBN: 978-0-8146-5979-3. Call #: Ref. BS 2341.2 .S37 1991 v.10.

Wansink, Craig S. *Chained in Christ: The Experience and Rhetoric of Paul's Imprisonments*. Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1966. ISBN: 978-1-8507-5605-7. Call #: BS 2506 .W325 1996.

Witherington, Ben. *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians*. The New Testament in Context. Valley Forge, Pa: Trinity Press International, 1994. ISBN: 978-1-56338-102-7. Call #: BS 2705.3 .W57 1994.