



2.2 Paul's Theology: The Letter to the Romans

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Last week we looked at two early Letters from the undisputed Pauline canon. This week we turn to the *magnum opus* of Paul's epistles, *The Letter to the Romans*, placed first among his letters in the New Testament not only because of its length but also because of its theological heft. In many ways, it is the "Last Will and Testament" of this most Jewish Apostle to the Gentiles, and is traditionally dated to the last few years of Paul's life. It contains within it the closest we get in Paul to Systematic Theology – a careful, detailed, nuanced exegesis of the Gospel of Justification and Salvation in and through Jesus Christ, and the proper relationship between the (Jewish) Law and the (Gentile) Gospel, while being mindful of the indebtedness of the Christian Church to the Revelation of God in the Covenant with Israel. Like all Paul's letters, Romans is also replete with moral exhortation and pastoral concern about the nature of life in the church community. All of Paul's vast arsenal of skills and talents are on full display throughout this text: Romans is full of dramatic shifts in genre and argumentation and style. At crucial times in the life of the Church – from Augustine to Aquinas, from Luther to Barth – the Letter to the Romans has ignited and galvanized Renewal, Reformation and Rededication to the timeless Gospel Message of Christianity.

Assignment #5 for Class on Saturday 16th February 2019

Reading

Please read through Paul's Letter to the Romans. I suggest reading the introduction to the Letter in your Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible beforehand; and then reading through the Letter in two sections: (1) Romans 1-8, which is a complex, sustained piece of theological analysis about the Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ; and (2) Romans 9-16, which includes additional comments about the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the church [9-11], and various exhortations about Christian life [12-16]. Go back and re-read the Letter again at a subsequent time, using the annotations in your NRSV to help with clarification and interpretation.

Thinking & Responding

For this week's Response Paper, I want you each to write a Response to a subsection of Paul's central theological argument [chs.1-11]: (1) 1:16-2:29; (2) 3:1-31; (3) 4:1-25; (4) 5:1-6:23; and (5) 7:1-8:39. For your assigned passage, try to do three things: (I) *Contextualize* the arguments; (II) *Summarize* the arguments; and (III) *Analyze* the arguments. Paul is constantly using contemporary metaphors and historical exegeses to bolster his arguments, and it is important to pay close attention to how these function. Please write a Response of approximately 450-500 words on your assigned sub-section (12-point font, double-spaced, one-inch margin, with your name at the top of the paper). Type up and print your Reflections, and be ready to share and discuss your Insights. I will collect them in to review and grade at the end of the class.