NT 622: EXEGESIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS  
Syllabus, Fall 2010  
Professor: Sean McDonough  
smcdonough@gordonconwell.edu  
Wed., Fri. 1045-1215

TEXT BOOKS

Required
Anthony Thiselton, The First Epistle to the Corinthians  
Ben Witherington, Conflict and Community in Corinth  
Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, St. Paul’s Corinth

Recommended
Gordon Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians

OVERVIEW

We often hear people say, “We need to get back to the way they did things in the early church!” You have to wonder if such people have taken even a cursory look at Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. This church had a staggering catalog of problems, from divisions based on economic or social status to sexual immorality to out of control worship services. Many of us might have been tempted to wash our hands of the whole situation.

But Paul did not. He worked with the Corinthians, and it is for this very reason that 1 Corinthians is so valuable for us today. We get to see first-hand how Paul dealt with a congregation whose struggles mirror those we often face in our churches today. We will see how he tries to use the cross as a lever to upend their current approach to life, which draws on the values of Corinthian culture rather than those of Christian commitment.

Studying the letter is not an easy task. We will need to bring all our exegetical resources to bear at various points in the class: theological and hermeneutical reflection; rhetorical criticism; insights from the social sciences; and traditional “historical-critical methods” are all necessary for a thorough understanding of this portion of God’s word. We will also tackle many controversial subjects, like gender roles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, which will test our capacity for constructive engagement with opposing points of view. Through it all, we will seek to become more ardent disciples of our servant Savior, and more effective communicators of his gospel. May God bless us as we move forward.

Introduction

CLASS 1

Introduction: A Letter to a Vibrant but Troubled Church  
Methodologies: How to Study this Complex Book  
Historical background  
Geographical setting  
Hellenistic time  
Destruction and rebirth  
St. Paul’s Corinth  
Paul and the Corinthian Church  
Crucial Themes  
The Basic Problem: Values of Cross versus Values of Corinth  
Hyper-Spirituality: tongues, sex and marriage
Trust in human wisdom
Divisiveness – apparently on intellectual, personal, economic lines
To eat or not to eat: the question of idol meat
Theological quandaries: the resurrection

**Part 1: Sophistry or Sacrifice**

**Classes 2-5**
Paul’s Gentle Introduction (1:1-9)
The Spectre of Division (1:10-17)
God’s Response (1:18-2:16)
  - God’s Paradoxical Wisdom
  - God’s Powerful and Penetrating Spirit
To Each His Own: Paul and Apollos’ Ministry (3:1-4:21)

**Part 2: The Right Use of the Body**

**Class 6**
The Immoral Man (5:1-13)
Lawsuits before Unbelievers (6:1-11)
The Body is for the Lord (6:12-20)
Sex and Marriage (7:1-40)

**Part 3: Food and Freedom**

**Class 7**
Everybody Knows Everything (8:1-9:27)
  - Knowledge Puffs Up, Love Builds Up
  - Idols aren’t Real…
  - …But Your Brothers and Sisters are
  - Paul’s Own Example
Israel: Idolatry and Immorality (10:1-13)
Idol Food in Idol Temples (10:14-11:1)

**Part 4: Order in the Church!**

**Class 8**
*Hermeneutical Paper Due*
Men, Women, and Prophecy (11:2-16)
Divisions at the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)

**Class 9**
Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)

**Part 5: The Resurrection**

**Class 10**
The Resurrection (15:1-58)
  - The Tradition
  - The Problem
  - Adam and Christ
  - The Great Change

**Part 6: Final Instructions and Greetings (16:1-24)**
ASSessment

| Translation/Class Preparation of Gk. Text of 1 Cor. | Due Final Day of Class (no extensions) | 15-30% (see below) |
| Hermeneutical Paper: The Long Road from Corinth | Due Oct 27 | 20-25% |
| Exegesis Paper | Due Dec 21 | 50-60% |

About THE ASSIGNMENTS

The Greek Competency quiz will be administered during Class 2. You will be asked to translate one or two verses from a text in the Greek New Testament, parse some verbs and nouns, and do some grammatical analysis. A sample exam resides outside my office. The quiz will be marked pass/fail and will not affect your final grade, but you must pass this quiz to continue in the course.

The Translation/Class Preparation component is designed to encourage thorough preparation of the Greek text of 1 Corinthians. A few notes:

1. **No translation, no comments.** Students who have not read the Greek text for the day with reasonable understanding are not permitted to ask questions or make comments in class (aside from e.g. “Could you move the overhead up?” or “Is the quiz next Monday?”). As noted in “What We Do and Why” (see below), there are comments that are not at all helpful, and this rule is intended to minimize such comments.

2. **If you translate less than 50% of the required Greek text, you fail the class.** There is simply no way a person should pass a Greek exegesis class when he or she has read less than half of the relevant material. This does not mean you have to parse every last word, but you do need to read the Greek with a reasonable level of understanding.

3. **The less you do, the more it is worth.** I don’t want to artificially inflate grades by giving a huge bonus to people who do what I consider the minimum reasonable amount of translation – namely, 100% – but I do want to discipline those who do considerably less. So if you do between 90-100% of the translation, it will be worth 15% of your final grade. If, however, you do between 80-90%, it will rise to 20%. Between 65-80% will be worth 25%, and between 50-65% will be worth 30%. For example: if you read 50% of the Greek, you will receive a 50 on the translation component, and that will be worth 30% of the final grade. This means you are essentially starting with a B, and you can only go down from there.

The Hermeneutical Paper will focus on the very difficult question of how to move from the Corinthian context to your own. The emphasis here is less on exegesis per se, and more on the underlying presuppositions which dictate how you apply the letter to the present day. In a 4-5 page essay, I would like you to explain the principles which ought to guide us as we move from exegesis to application in the case of 1 Corinthians. You should use at least one concrete example from the letter in your paper. You may wish to take one of the controversial topics (roles of men and women; spiritual gifts, etc.) for this purpose, or you may wish to discuss the relevance of an apparently “irrelevant” topic, like meat sacrificed to
idols. In any event, the crucial thing is how well you articulate the principles for moving from Corinth to your setting. In other words, I am NOT asking you to solve the question of whether people should speak in tongues in your church – I am asking you how one ought to go about making such a judgment. You will be marked primarily on the cogency of your argument and the clarity of your presentation.

The Exegesis Paper should be a 12-15 page paper drawn from any text in 1 Corinthians. You must pass the exegesis paper to pass the class. Usually 6-12 verses is about right, but exceptions are possible. For the format, you should follow that of the Harper’s New Testament series, which is a running commentary on the text – less choppy than some other series, but still packed with exegetical detail. (Note, however, that unlike Harper’s you need to properly document your use of secondary sources throughout the paper. You paper should also include more detail on the Greek text.) At the conclusion of your exegesis, please attach a page or so concerning the application of your passage to the present day. Remember that this is a Greek exegesis paper, and you must show a thorough acquaintance with the Greek text, from textual criticism to translation, to issues of structure, grammar and lexicography. Historical background is also crucial, as is your text’s relationship to the rest of the letter. I will expect you to integrate all relevant information from the various topics you have studied in Interpreting the New Testament. Please note the page limit: more is not at all better! I will grow increasingly unhappy with each additional page. (You may, however, include sentence flows, discourse analysis, or structural charts as appendices.) Be concise. Please use 1.5 spacing and 12 point font (except of course for footnotes). You must include page numbers in your paper so that I can readily see if you have exceeded the page limit. Papers without page numbers will be penalized. I look forward to the fruits of your labor.

Note 1: If you wish to receive work back, you must include your box number on the paper. Unnumbered papers will be kept in my office.

Note 2: NO WORK IS ACCEPTED BY EMAIL. Each paper must be handed in as a hard copy.

Note 3: Please refrain from putting the paper in an envelope unless absolutely necessary.
Greek Exegesis Classes
12 Step Method

The Method and the Class

Those of you who have not had me for Interpreting the New Testament, or who have not had Dr Stuart for Old Testament, may not be familiar with the 12 Step Method for interpreting the Bible. Don’t panic: all of the New Testament faculty teach essentially the same methodology. It is simply the terminology that differs. Below I give a brief summary of Stuart’s 12 step method (with my own very minor adjustments) so that you will know what I am referring to during the course of the semester.

In Greek exegesis classes, I will expect you to think through all twelve steps as you prepare the texts we will be covering that day. Obviously this will involve consulting secondary sources on matters like historical background, but the bulk of the work will consist of you assessing for yourself the various exegetical issues that may arise. It is also important to remember that not all the steps will be equally relevant for every text. We may be speaking about a passage which has no significant textual variants but raises major theological issues. Or we may find a passage in which the meaning of a single word carries enormous weight in interpretation.

Generally speaking, in the early lectures of the term I try to do in-depth exegesis of the initial chapters of the book, explicitly invoking the various steps of the exegetical process (not necessarily in order). As the semester goes on, we tend to take a more synthetic approach, dealing with the major themes of the chapter or section, and dealing with particular exegetical problems as they arise. Often the discussion may focus on one exegetical skill with particular relevance for that text.

The reason I find the 12 step method so helpful is that it forces you to think through all the potentially relevant information for exegesis and application. The Bible is a very complex book, and a single favored approach can never do justice to its richness. We need to be open to a variety of questions that arise from the text and develop skills for addressing all of them. The 12 step method gives you a framework for asking and answering those questions.

The Method in Brief

The twelve step method can be broken down into five major categories. The various steps answer the questions:

- What is there? (Text, Translation, Lexical Data, Grammatical Data)
- What sort of thing is it? (Genre/Form)
- How is it set up? (Structure)
- How does it fit in? (Historical Context, Literary Context, Biblical Context, Secondary Literature)
- Where does it go? (Theology, Application)

Here is a little more detail on each of the steps, with the questions you will ask yourself as you work through a passage:

Text
Is the NA27 secure, or might the original have read differently? Do the variants highlight any interesting interpretive issues?
Translation
How are you going to put your Greek text into your target language? How can you capture nuances in the text without overtranslating?

Lexical Data
Speaking of translation, what do the words mean, anyway? Do any of them necessitate a thorough word study? How are the important words used in the OT?

Grammatical Data
Speaking of words, how do they fit together? What is intended by the various prepositions, nouns, verbs, articles, particles, etc.?

Genre/Form
What am I dealing with at the macro level (genre) – an epistle, an apocalypse, a gospel? How should that affect the way I interpret this passage? What am I dealing with at the micro-level (form) – a miracles story, a household code, a dream vision account? Can I compare with similar forms inside, or outside, the canon?

Structure
What does the X-ray of my passage look like? How does it flow? Is there an argument I need to follow? Any parallelism?

Historical Context
The passage was not written in a vacuum – how does the “outside world” affect my understanding of the text?

Literary Context
How does my passage fit with the surrounding material? With the book as a whole?

Biblical Context
How does my passage fit in with the OT? With the rest of the NT?

Theology
How does my passage fit in the flow of the bible’s story of the work of the creating and redeeming God? What contribution does it make to questions asked in systematic theology?

Secondary Literature
What have other people said about my passage? Do I need to alter any of my conclusions in light of their input?

Application
How does this text apply to those in my church community? How should it affect my own life? How would it relate to other church situations I am aware of around the world?