Last Updated: 12/21/2022

Preaching from the Corinthian Correspondence

Syllabus

# Introduction

## Purpose and Description

This class is designed to provide students with the opportunity to wrestle with the unique challenges that arise in preaching through the Corinthian Correspondence. As such, this class has a split personality. On the one hand, our purpose requires us to explore deeply the exegetical and historical contours of 1 and 2 Corinthians. This, in and of itself, is a monumental task. It is true that these books contain some of the most beautiful and important and famous passages in all of Paul’s letters, but at the same time they are his most historically obscure and complex.

On the other hand, we are not interested in these books for merely historical or theological reasons. We want to learn how to *preach* them. That question brings in a whole new set of issues. How do we bridge the gap between Paul’s purpose and the needs of the contemporary church?

The intersection of these two goals—understanding what the text *meant* to Paul’s original audience, and what the text *means* for the contemporary church—is particularly challenging for these letters. In fact, I think these might be the two most difficult books in the NT to preach “cover to cover.” Why? Because, on the one hand, these letters are systemically *specific* in their focus on the unique challenges facing the church at Corinth, and on the other hand *our* situation is so markedly different from theirs.

This challenge, however, gives us a unique opportunity. Here we have the sermonic task and challenge expressed in its most concentrated form: how do we move from *them* to *us* in a way that respects the integrity of both audiences?

## Dates and Times.

We will meet the week of July 24-28 as follows:

Monday 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM  
Tue, Wed, Thur: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM  
Friday 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

## Instructor

Thomas Keene  
email: tkeene@rts.edu (this is the fastest way to reach me)  
Net: <http://twitter.com/tommykeene> <http://facebook.com/keenetommy> [http://signandshadow.com](http://signandshadow.com/)

# Required Reading

I’ve split the required reading into two categories: (1) readings to be completed before class, and (2) readings to be completed after our week together. **However, the more readings grouped under (2) you can complete, the better, and that’s especially true for the commentary reading.** Some of the readings will be provided for you on the course website.

## Before the First Day of Class

About 500 pages of reading, including annotated Bible reading (see below) must be completed before the first day of class. You will be required to submit a reading report and to have your “Investigative Reading” results available on the first day of class.

### Bible Reading

You will need to have read 1/2 Corinthians *twice*, as follows:

* **All at once reading:** Read (or listen to) each book in a single sitting, preferably from a Reader’s Bible (<https://www.crossway.org/bibles/esv-readers-bible-cob/>) or using an audio bible. The logic of this assignment is described here: [The Problem with Reading the Bible Verse-by-Verse – Sign and Shadow](https://www.signandshadow.com/2022/11/07/the-problem-with-reading-the-bible-verse-by-verse/)
* **Investigative Reading:** Read through each book a second time, this time making a list of as many distinct textual, historical, exegetical, and pastoral questions you can think of. You will turn in this list as part of your reading report on the first day of class. You are welcome to use any format of your choice to do this: pen and paper is fine, but you can also record your questions digitally or in a journaling Bible (though that last one might not give you much room). The goal here is to investigate the text, and **the assignment is for you, not for me**. Use this as an opportunity to exegetically investigate the text in a manner that is helpful to you. You don’t need answers: just the questions. Dig down deep; no question is too obvious or too difficult. You’ll find a sample of my own work in Canvas. For more advice on how to do this, see [Exegetical Inquiry: The Question is more important than the Answer – Sign and Shadow](https://www.signandshadow.com/2022/09/28/exegetical-inquisition-the-question-is-more-important-than-the-answer/)

### Secondary Sources

Kruger, Michael J., ed. *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament: The Gospel Realized*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2016. The chapters on the Corinthian Correspondence.

Dahl, N. A. “The Particularity of the Pauline Epistles as a Problem in the Ancient Church.” In *Studies in Ephesians: Introductory Questions, Text- & Edition-Critical Issues, Interpretation of Texts and Themes*, edited by David Hollholm, Vemund Blomkvist, and Tord Fornberg, 165–78. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.

Gaffin, R. B. *In the Fullness of Time: An Introduction to the Biblical Theology of Acts and Paul*. Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2022. PAGES 185-419.

Witherington, B. *A Week in the Life of Corinth*. Grand Rapids: IVP, 2012.

### Preaching/Exhortation Resources

Bettler, J. “Application.” In The Preacher and Preaching: Reviving the Art in the Twentieth Century, 331–49. Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1986.

Clowney, E. P. “Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures.” In The Preacher and Preaching, edited by Samuel Logan. Phillipsburg, N.Y.: P & R Publishing, 2011.

Powell, M. A. What Do They Hear?: Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit and Pew. Nashville: Abingdon, 2007.

## After the First day of Class

In addition to the reading assigned above you will be responsible to read about 1500 pages of additional material (in addition to any material you read for other assignments, like the research paper) as follows:

### Commentaries: 1200 pages (+/-)

You will need to read around 1200 pages of material from commentaries of your choosing on 1/2 Corinthians (a suggested list will be provided). These should be substantive *exegetical* commentaries, preferably on the Greek text, that represent contemporary scholarly appropriation of these books. The page count should be roughly even between 1st and 2nd Corinthians. You will submit this assignment by providing a 4-6 page “reading report” that provides an “appreciative critique” of the commentaries you read.

You can accomplish this in a couple of ways:

* By picking two representative commentaries on each book and reading them cover-to-cover
* By picking two representative commentaries and reading around 600 of pages from each
* By isolating a set of passages from each book and reading multiple commentaries on those designated sections until you get to 1200 pages.
* Other creative solutions will be considered on request!

### Readings in Preaching: 300 pages (+/-)

You will also need to read around 300 pages of material focused on preaching. You will submit this assignment by providing a 3-5 page reading report on what you have read.

As above, there are several ways to accomplish this:

* By reading (or listening to) sermons on 1 and 2 Corinthians and providing an “appreciatively critical” of those sermons from a *preaching* perspective (as opposed to an exegetical critique).
* By reading a book or set of articles of your choosing on preaching and providing an appreciative review of that book.
* Or by finding some other creative way of completing the assignment, upon approval of the professor.

# Assessment

## Bible Reading (10%)

Must be completed by first day of class for full credit. You will submit this by (1) testifying that you completed the all-at-once reading and (2) having your questions available for discussion on day 1.

## General Reading (10%)

Some of this is required before the first day of class. A form will be provided online by which you can affirm you have read this material.

For the remainder, you will submit this assignment view short “reading reports” as described above.

## In Class Discussion (10%)

You are expected to be actively engaged in class. This of course includes regular attendance, but in addition you should be interacting with readings, asking questions, sharing your insights, and debating the issues. Discussion will be a regular part of the course rhythm, in addition to lecture material.

We will also have periodic “case studies in preaching” that will require you to think on the fly and potentially “preach” for 3-5 minutes on a given topic.

## Short Exhorational Papers (30%)

You will write two short **Biblical-Theological Exhortations**. The first one will be due on the last day of class, presented as a 10 (or so) minute sermon. The second will be due the 2 weeks after the last day of class.

Details:

* The purpose of these papers is to practice the hermeneutical methodology presented in the class. You should endeavor to utilize all the tools available to you, but you will be graded on effort and the degree to which you incorporate previous feedback.
* The central thesis of an exhortational paper should address the way in which your chosen text solves a pastoral/practical matter of the Christian life. How does the text solve the pastoral or practical problem that you would like to address? For more on this, consult the document “How to Write a Biblical-Theological Exhortation” on Canvas.
* Aim for 1500 words or less (excluding footnotes), standard academic formatting (cite your sources, use formal language, etc.), but this is not a research paper.
* Your first paper will be turned in as a paper, but you will additionally be required to preach it on the last day of class (in your natural preaching style). The class, in turn, will provide an “appreciative critique” of the preached version of your exhortation.
* You will receive extensive feedback on each paper, which you should pay careful attention to as you prepare for the next paper, culminating in the final Exhortational Research Paper (see below).
* These two papers are practice for the Exhortational Research Paper below.

## Exhortational Research Paper: 40% (**Due Date: october 30, 2023**)

The culmination of this class is a “Biblical-Theological and Exhortational” Research Paper. That may sound confusing and difficult and obscure, but as you approach the end of class I hope it will be clear what this means. You will have two opportunities to practice this kind of exhortational paper (see above). You can consider this an expanded and more academic version of the previous papers you have written.

Details:

* 2500- 4000 words (excluding footnotes), standard academic format.
* Like the previous papers, the thesis of this paper should be centered around “the (pastoral/practical) problem that the text solves.”
* This is a research paper, so you should adequately engage relevant literature in all relevant areas that you address (that is, biblical exegesis, historical backgrounds, Christological interpretation, theological meaning, pastoral application, et. al). This will ordinarily require you to substantively interact with at least twelve quality resources.
* The primary way that that this paper differs from the previous papers is that this paper is a research paper. That means that it will be more academic in tone, and it will also require more research in the areas of exegesis (“box 2” of the Clowney “Square”) and Christological interpretation (“box 3” of the Clowney “Square”). You may also want to engage contemporary authors in pastoral ministry, sociology, psychology, anthropology, cultural analysis, etc. as you apply the text to your pastoral problem (“box 4”).

## Grading Scale

96-100 A 87-89 B+ Etc.

90-95 A- 83-86 B <60 F

80-82 B-

# Outline And Further Reading

An outline of lecture material will be provided on the first day of class to assist you in studying. I will also provide slides of my lecture material as we proceed in class. An extended bibliography will also be provided.

**Course Objectives Related to MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**

Course: Hermeneutics

Professor: Thomas Keene

Campus: Washington DC

Date: Spring 2020

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| **MDiv\* Student Learning Outcomes**  *In order to measure the success of the MDiv curriculum, RTS has defined the following as the intended outcomes of the student learning process. Each course contributes to these overall outcomes. This rubric shows the contribution of this course to the MDiv outcomes.*  *\*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.* | | **Rubric**   * **Strong** * **Moderate** * **Minimal** * **None** | **Mini-Justification** |
| **Articulation**  **(oral & written)** | Broadly understands and articulates knowledge, both oral and written, of essential biblical, theological, historical, and cultural/global information, including details, concepts, and frameworks. Also includes ability to preach and teach the meaning of Scripture to both heart and mind with clarity and enthusiasm. | Moderate | - Student must submit an extended paper with biblical-theological analysis of the Bible.  - Course participation. |
| **Scripture** | Significant knowledge of the original meaning of Scripture. Also, the concepts for and skill to research further into the original meaning of Scripture and to apply Scripture to a variety of modern circumstances. (Includes appropriate use of original languages and hermeneutics; and integrates theological, historical, and cultural/global perspectives.) | Strong | - Lectures will heavily emphasize biblical literacy and interpretation  - Paper is required to be an analysis of a biblical passage |
| **Reformed Theology** | Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards. | Minimal | - Lectures will be from a Reformed perspective but will not focus on distinctive doctrines |
| **Sanctification** | Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student’s sanctification. | Moderate | - A component of our interpretive endeavors will be to grow in our own conformity to Jesus. |
| **Worldview** | Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God. Includes ability to interact within a denominational context, within the broader worldwide church, and with significant public issues. | Moderate | - Concern to see ourselves in redemptive history  - Concern to see Christ as the center of Scripture and all things. |
| **Winsomely Reformed** | Embraces a winsomely Reformed ethos. (Includes an appropriate ecumenical spirit with other Christians, especially Evangelicals; a concern to present the Gospel in a God-honoring manner to non-Christians; and a truth-in-love attitude in disagreements.) | Moderate | - The material covered should be generally applicable to most students of the Bible. |
| **Pastoral Ministry** | Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both churched and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians. | Moderate | - The paper will demonstrate the exegetical work required for sermon preparation.  - Our analysis will have a particular view to preaching. - Part of understanding the biblical text is understanding its applicability to self and others |