

The Problems with Paul

Paul and Sexuality, Slavery, Sexism

The Bible is Dangerous

- ✓ Make it say whatever you want it to say
- ✓ Has a history of ungodly interpretation – quoting scripture is not re-presenting God
- ✓ Interpretation leads to belief and belief leads to practice
 - ✓ II Peter 1:20; 3:14-16

The Danger of Private Interpretation:
Inspired \neq Informed

Romans 10:1,2

Zeal without knowledge is dangerous

Exegesis

v.

Eisegesis

Exegesis

To lead out of

To try to distance oneself from the passage and
allow it to speak for itself

Allowing the Bible to shape, challenge, and change
your position and perspective

Exegesis pays attention to...

- ✓ Socio-Historical Context
- ✓ Authorial Audience and Intention
 - ✓ Audience Reception
- ✓ Semantics, Etymology, Original Languages
 - ✓ Broader Literary Context
- ✓ Theological Consistency of Author and within the Bible as a whole

Example: *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

- Racism in America
- Civil Rights Movement
- Dr. King's life and work
 - SCLC
 - Boycotts
- Bombings in Birmingham
 - "A Call for Unity"

Example: *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*

- Non-Violence v. Black Nationalism
- Augustine, Aquinas, Tillich, Douglass
- Written on pieces of newspaper, compiled and edited by Wyatt T. Walker and Willie Pearl Mackey
- Published in whole in June 1963

Exegesis: the context, audience, original language, setting, and author are critical to an informed interpretation.

To understand what a passage is saying you have to take into consideration what it meant and said to those for whom it was originally written and why

Culture and Context Matter

Hermeneutics – take an ancient text that was not written for you, that was culturally conditioned, and translate its meaning for our contemporary culture and context

Informed Exegetical Readings of Scripture

An Informed Reading of Paul

1. Apostolic Authority v. Prophetic Speech
2. Paul and Pseudepigraphy / Deutero-Pauline
3. Relationship of Context/Culture to Interpretation
4. Hermeneutic of Analogy
5. Developing a Pauline Hermeneutic

By what authority does Paul speak?

Paul's Perspective

There are several instances where Paul invokes his authority as an apostle to justify his perspective on matters of the church

“I Paul” “I tell you” “I would that”

Gal. 5:1-2; I Cor. 11:3-12

Apostolic Authority v. Prophetic Speech

In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul is not portrayed as an Apostle = one of the original chosen and sent by Jesus

How much of Paul's perspective is God ordained and/or culturally conditioned?

Should we accept “because Paul said so” or are we obligated to broaden the discussion?

Is there space for us to challenge Paul's perspective and if so upon what grounds?

Acts 15

Sources for Theological Reflection and Discernment

- Communal discerning and discussion
 - Submission to authority
- Experience of the conversion of Gentiles
- Revelation of what the Spirit was saying
 - Practical / fitting to their context
 - Confirmation / data
- Scripture: direct, analogous, implication

Pseudepigraphy:

The false ascription of a piece of writing to an author

Deutero-Pauline

These are the contested works – Ephesians, Colossians, Pastorals (I & II Timothy, Titus)

- Grammar, style, theology

Four Paul's in the Bible

1. Original Paul – seven letters
2. Deutero-Paul: Col. & Eph.
3. Pastoral Paul
4. Luke's Paul

Paul's Position on Women

- I Cor. 11:2-16
- I Cor. 14:26-40
- Ephesians 5:22-24
- Colossians 3:18
- I Timothy 2:8-15

How much does it matter that 3/5 Pauline positions on women were not written by Paul?

Culture, Context, and Scripture

Culture & Context

1. How have we worked around Paul's position on women and now have women clergy and pastors?
2. How have we worked around Paul's position on slavery?

Culture & Context

3. How much does the cultural context of the writer impact the Word of God through the writer?
4. How do we reconcile the contentions of culture between Paul's day and our own as it applies to interpreting scripture?

Hermeneutic of Analogy

Hermeneutic of Analogy

There are cultural mores and norms of antiquity that we no longer share and therefore we have to distance ourselves from the world of the biblical writers and find what is analogous at the deeper level of feeling and experience to translate scripture for today

Pauline Hermeneutic:
How do we read/interpret/apply Paul today?

Developing a Pauline Hermeneutic

- Read Paul against Paul
- Read Paul in light of Jesus
- Read Paul through the lens of all the Bible

Developing a Pauline Hermeneutic

- Read Paul in comparison to the revealed will of God
- Read Paul in relation to your deepest convictions about God