

**Reformed Theological Seminary
Winter 2026**

**NT5250 Acts and Romans 2 Hrs.
Monday, Jan 12 – Friday, Jan 16
3:00 – 9:00 P.M.**

**Dr. Guy Prentiss Waters
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Description (as per RTS *Catalog*)

“A study of Acts and Paul’s Epistle to the Romans that emphasizes both the original meaning and the modern meaning” (p.70)

Course Objectives

- (1)** To understand and critically to evaluate academic research in Acts and Romans.
- (2)** To understand issues of special introduction pertaining to Acts and Romans.
- (3)** To understand Acts and Romans in their first century context.
- (4)** To understand the implications of Luke’s and Paul’s writings for the contemporary church, and to understand Luke and Paul as a model of applying theology to the life of the church.
- (5)** To understand with greater clarity and precision key questions and issues in Acts and Romans: the person and work of Christ, the nature and condition of man, covenant and law, the application of redemption (justification by faith alone, sanctification, union with Christ, etc.).

Required Texts (see below for page assts.; note the abbreviations)

- (1)** The Holy Bible, preferably in a recent translation such as the ESV or NASB.
- (2)** Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (**2d ed.**; Zondervan), pp. 285-330, 391-414. [**Note:** For course purposes, the 1st ed. is **not** acceptable]
- (3)** Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Perspectives on Pentecost* (P&R) [All]
- (4)** Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *In the Fullness of Time* (Crossway) [All]
- (5)** Dennis E. Johnson, Jr., *The Message of Acts in the History of Redemption* (P&R) [All]
- (6)** Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Eerdmans), pp. 44-90.

Assignments & Requirements

- (1) Final Exam** – A final exam will cover the lectures and must be taken no later than **Friday, January 30**. You may use an unmarked Greek New Testament or an unmarked, unannotated copy of the Bible in translation. No other resources are permitted. The final exam is worth **35%** of your final grade.

(2) Primary Reading – Read Acts & Romans in translation. You must read Acts & Romans in their entirety this semester. This assignment is due at the beginning of the final exam. You will be asked to give a percentage reflecting the extent of your reading. This assignment will be **5%** of your course grade.

(3) Secondary Reading – Not later than **Friday, February 20**, you will complete a form stating the percentage of reading that you have completed (see “Required Texts” above). This assignment will be **25%** of your final grade.

(4) Research Paper – A 10-12 page research paper on some text from Acts or Romans. The text and topic must be pre-approved by the professor. See paper guidelines below. The paper is due **Friday, February 20**. **35%** of your final grade.

Attendance

Class attendance is required for NT 5250. If a student anticipates an unavoidable absence, he should notify the instructor in advance. Each hour of unexcused absence subjects the student to reduction of his final grade by one-half of a letter grade.

Grading Scale

The grading scale for this course is the seminary’s grading scale. You may find it listed in the *RTS Catalog*.

Plagiarism

Please review the seminary’s policy on plagiarism. Plagiarized work will subject the student to failure in the course and possible disciplinary action.

In-Class Computer Use

Computers and tablets are permitted in this course for course-related purposes only. Cell phones must be set to silent and stowed. If for some extraordinary reason you need to take a call, you may either wait until the break or leave the classroom.

Paper Guidelines

You will submit a 10-12 page research paper, exclusive of cover page and bibliography. This paper must demonstrate awareness of and competence in both the primary and secondary literature.

You must submit your paper electronically. Submit your paper through Canvas, and be sure to submit it as a **PDF attachment only**.

The paper should have the following elements and meet the following guidelines:

- A concise introduction that reflects your awareness of the pertinent issues
- A strong, incisive, clearly-stated thesis in the opening of the paper
- A cogent argument that is integrally tied to and flows from your thesis
- Organization that is both inherent to the paper and evident to your reader
- A conclusion that properly concludes the argument of your paper, concisely reflecting on the implications of your thesis for our understanding of the theology of Paul and of its significance for the church today.
- Appropriate exegetical and biblical-theological treatment of the biblical data relevant to your topic
- Fair and decisive engagement of the secondary literature. You should engage positions that are similar to your own and positions with which you disagree.
- Use of at least **eight (8) sources, one of which must be a journal article, none of which may be a text required for this course**. “Use” means not merely inclusion in a bibliography, but also footnoted referencing in your paper. Do not string together quotations in your paper, and be sure to keep your quotations concise and to the point.
- Footnotes (not endnotes or parenthetical references!). Footnotes should be single spaced, 10 pt font. The first line of each footnote should be indented.
- Pagination – each page should be clearly numbered
- Consistent, readable margins – ½ to 1 inch margins on each side of the text
- Text set in left justification, Times New Roman font, 12 pt. Set your indentation at ½ inch.
- Double or 1.5 spacing only
- Greek or Hebrew, typed (no transliterations)
- Documentation according to format and standards prescribed in the *SBL Handbook of Style* – this applies both to the body of the paper and the bibliography. Please take special note of the abbreviations.
- Absence of typographical, grammatical, syntactical, or spelling errors. Such errors will result in a lower grade on your paper. Proofread!

The Good Paper Guide

In grading your final paper, I will make reference to the following criteria (in addition to the guidelines set forth above, p.5). I have adopted these criteria, with slight modification, from a syllabus of Dr. W. Duncan Rankin.

General

Is the paper interesting? substantial? well-written?

Is the paper sufficiently focused or developed?

Is the paper organized? organized clearly?

Development and Flow

Does the paper show clear plan and purpose?

Treatment

Is the thesis of your paper stated clearly? Is your thesis pedestrian?

Does your paper raise more issues than you have adequately addressed in it?

Does your paper raise issues that cannot be adequately addressed in a paper of this scope and length?

Does your paper provide sufficient data to enable the reader to understand the problems and issues?

Does your paper set forth and engage various positions fully? fairly? objectively?

Does your paper provide careful, biblical exegesis?

Do your conclusions follow from the premises and data you set forth in the paper?

Does your paper evidence knowledge of and interaction with the broader Reformed tradition? views within modern evangelicalism? non-evangelical views?

Does your paper have material that should have been excised? Does it have material that is not germane to the subject?

Is the length of your paper adequate to address the issues raised?

Documentation

Is your paper well documented? adequately documented? poorly documented?

Bibliography

Does your paper have a bibliography?

Is your bibliography excellent? adequate? poor?

Does your paper omit key secondary sources that should have been included?

Appearance

Is your paper neat in appearance? Is your paper annoying to read?

Errors

Does your paper have typographical errors? grammatical errors? syntactical errors? spelling errors?

Time of Submission

Was your paper submitted on time?

Did you submit it in both hard copy and/or electronically (*per* syllabus instructions)?

Your assigned grade is based upon the following: your successful completion of the instructions for this assignment, as those instructions are set forth in this syllabus; your overall quality of presentation; my assessment of your grasp of the subject matter; your skill in communicating the material; the quality of your work relative to your peers in the course.

Paul & The Letters of Paul in Church History

"At length they saw a man coming (namely Paul), of a low stature, bald (or shaved) on the head, crooked thighs, handsome legs, hollow-eyed; had a crooked nose; full of grace; for sometimes he appeared as a man, sometimes he had the countenance of an angel."

Acts of Paul and Thecla, 1.7

"With avid intensity I seized the sacred writings of your Spirit and especially the apostle Paul. Where at one time I used to think he contradicted himself and the text of his words disagreed with the testimonies of the law and the prophets, the problems simply vanished. The holy oracles now presented to me a simple face, and I learnt to 'rejoice with trembling' (Ps. 11:7)."

Augustine, Confessions, VII.xxi (27)

"Meanwhile in that same year, 1519, I had begun interpreting the Psalms once again. I felt confident that I was now more experienced, since I had dealt in university courses with St. Paul's Letters to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the Letter to the Hebrews. I had conceived a burning desire to understand what Paul meant in his Letter to the Romans, but thus far there had stood in my way, not the cold blood around my heart, but that one word which is in chapter one: "The justice of God is revealed in it." I hated that word, "justice of God," which, by the use and custom of all my teachers, I had been taught to understand philosophically as referring to formal or active justice, as they call it, i.e., that justice by which God is just and by which he punishes sinners and the unjust.

But I, blameless monk that I was, felt that before God I was a sinner with an extremely troubled conscience. I couldn't be sure that God was appeased by my satisfaction. I did not love, no, rather I hated the just God who punishes sinners. In silence, if I did not blaspheme, then certainly I grumbled vehemently and got angry at God. I said, "Isn't it enough that we miserable sinners, lost for all eternity because of original sin, are oppressed by every kind of calamity through the Ten Commandments? Why does God heap sorrow upon sorrow through the Gospel and through the Gospel threaten us with his justice and his wrath?" This was how I was raging with wild and disturbed conscience. I constantly badgered St. Paul about that spot in Romans 1 and anxiously wanted to know what he meant.

I meditated night and day on those words until at last, by the mercy of God, I paid attention to their context: "The justice of God is revealed in it, as it is written: 'The just person lives by faith.'" I began to understand that in this verse the justice of God is that by which the just person lives by a gift of God, that is by faith. I began to understand that this verse means that the justice of God is revealed through the Gospel, but it is a passive justice, i.e. that by which the merciful God justifies us by faith, as it is written: "The just person lives by faith." All at once I felt that I had been born again and entered into paradise itself through open gates. Immediately I saw the whole of Scripture in a different light. I ran through the Scriptures from memory and found that other terms had analogous meanings, e.g., the work of God, that is, what God works in us; the power of God, by which he makes us powerful; the wisdom of God, by which he makes us wise; the strength of God, the salvation of God, the glory of God.

I exalted this sweetest word of mine, "the justice of God," with as much love as before I had hated it with hate. This phrase of Paul was for me the very gate of paradise. Afterward I read Augustine's "On the Spirit and the Letter," in which I found what I had not dared hope for. I discovered that he too interpreted "the justice of God" in a similar way, namely, as that with which God clothes us when he justifies us. Although Augustine had said it imperfectly and did not explain in detail how God imputes justice to us, still it pleased me that he taught the justice of God by which we are justified."

Martin Luther, 1545 (LW 4:421-428, trans. Andrew Thornton, OSB; © 1983, St. Anselm Abbey)

"In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*

"The Reformation fought and conquered in the name of Paul"

Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

Course: Acts and Romans

Professor: Waters

Campus: Houston

Date: Winter 2026

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u> <i>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.</i> <i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i>		<u>Rubric</u> • Strong • Moderate • Minimal • None	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
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.	Strong	Theology of Acts, Romans; Research Paper on some text of Acts and Romans
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	Major part of the class is exegesis of Acts and Romans; Original languages are used in class and encouraged in writing assignment.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Moderate	Traditional Reformed categories are shown to find their basis in Acts and Romans
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	Personal application is made in class from many texts of Acts and Romans
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	Multi-faceted applications are made from texts of Acts and Romans, e.g. church and culture.
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	Non-Reformed scholarship is charitably discussed and engaged in class and readings.
Pastoral Ministry	Ability to minister the Word of God to hearts and lives of both church and unchurched, to include preaching, teaching, leading in worship, leading and shepherding the local congregation, aiding in spiritual maturity, concern for non-Christians.	Minimal	Paul's pastoral practice is addressed throughout the course.