

Paul's Epistles (NT5300) –Spring 2026 (3 hours)

Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR

Dr Bruce Lowe received his first doctorate in Analytical Chemistry and taught, consulted and researched in a university setting over several years in both Chemistry and Chemical Engineering. He then completed his MDiv at RTS Orlando, becoming an ordained Presbyterian minister and working in university ministry, as a youth pastor, and in church revitalization. He completed his doctorate in Ancient History / New Testament Studies where his thesis has focused on the purpose of Romans through attention to its cultural setting. **In this course students will not only gain a classic seminary understanding of Paul, but through interaction with Roman culture, understand him and his letters more broadly. In addition, it will be our purpose to understand how Paul thought as a Christians, so we might see how to think as Christians today.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Little needs to be said about Paul. He and his letters are a vital part of how we are to understand the Christian faith. In this course there is both a theoretical and practical bent. You will be given an understanding of Paul himself, but will also be exposed to the cultures which shaped him. It is only as we understand both of these that we are truly in a position to see his mind and thus the way a Christian should think.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To provide a general understanding of each of Paul's letters.
2. To highlight the specific value of each of Paul's letters for today – particularly the counter-cultural message Paul presented in his own day and its relevance for us today.
3. To resolve the key issues & 'problem passages' in Paul and his writings.
4. To consider how a Christian should think.

Required Texts:

M. Kruger ed., *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the New Testament* (Crossway, 2016) ISBN 978-1-4335-3676-2¹

Grant Macaskill, *Living in Union with Christ:* (Baker, 2019) ISBN 978-1540961242

David Williams, *Paul's Metaphors* (Baker, 2003) ISBN 978-0-8010-4807-4

¹ Students will be expected to read relevant entries for each of Paul's letters in this books and on the **final exam confirm what % they have read** for percentage points on the exam.

Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (Eerdmans, 1997)
ISBN: 978-0-8028-4469-9

ASSESSMENT

- 5%** Canvas & Class Discussion #1, **Due date: see schedule below.**²
- 5%** Canvas & Class Discussion#2, **Due date: see schedule below.**²
- 10%** Review of 1st 2 chapters of Ridderbos & Macaskill **Due date: see schedule below.**³
- 10%** Summary 12 Metaphors (write on one metaphor each chapter) **Due date: see schedule below.**⁴
- 30%** Research Paper; **Due date: see schedule below.**⁵
- 40%** Final exam; **Due date: see schedule below.**

ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT FOR SYNC STUDENTS

It per RTS policy, it is required that *if* you are a Sync student (zooming into class for the more than ½ the class sessions) you are required to have minimum of 5 interactions with other students as well as 7 interactions with me (the professor). These must have some assessment value connected to them. The 5% canvas discussions require you to have two interactions each with other students. In addition, I will require you to interact with each during a class discussion for 2%. In terms of interaction with me, this will be done

² You will be required to read a short article and interact on both Canvas and in class for an overall grade of 5% grade. You must 1) read the article; 2) write a short paragraph giving your response to the ideas in the article; 3) post your response on Canvas; 4) give a brief two to three sentence response to someone else's paragraph (on Canvas); and 5) come to class to interact on what you have read. Marks will be awarded based on your on-line submissions as well as your interaction in class - #0 (= 0%) is "Pietism"; #1 is "In Common"; #2 is "Deissmann on Paul".

³ This assignment should be about 2 pages, single-spaced. You will want to structure it like this: A short paragraph summarizing the content of the first two chapters, then a lengthy section listing succinctly the things you liked about it, then a similar sized section on the things you didn't like. A brief conclusion will list things like and who you might recommend this book to. REMEMBER, the goal of this assignment is to prove to me that you have read the book... so adding specific details will help in this process.

⁴ This will be about 4 pages single-spaced – approx. three summaries per page. The sections you choose will be examinable – so (e.g.) on the final exam you may be asked to write an essay on the metaphor you chose from the chapter on "Slavery and Freedom."

⁵ This will be **10-15 pages** (single spaced), *including bibliography*. It will be a critical paper in which I wish you to interact with secondary literature (At least 10 good sources: journal articles, monographs and a range of commentaries from at least three different traditions – e.g. Reformed/Evangelical; Roman Catholic; Liberal Protestant; Classical History). The topic will be one of your own choice, negotiated with me. If you are stuck for a topic, I can assign one to you – see posted list of topics. IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST COURSE IN SEMINARY OR IF YOU ARE STILL FINDING THE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS CHALLENGING, I RECOMMEND YOU CHOOSE THE "SPECIAL TOPIC" I WILL ALSO HAVE AVAILABLE –designed to help you get orientated to seminary research. This paper is to be uploaded into the relevant folder in **Canvas**.

routinely at the end of each class for 5 minutes (or perhaps in the middle of class breaks sometimes). Completing a minimum of 7 such interactions together will constitute 5% (which will be taken from the 30% for your research paper).

Office Hours: **Monday**, 12-5pm; **Tuesday**, 12-1pm. Please email or text for appointment time.

WHEN IS THE COURSE BEING RUN?

Monday 6-9pm, February 2nd – May 4th

General Outline

Session	Date	Class Time
1	F2	What does it mean to be a Christian?
2	F9 5% Article #1 "Deissmann"	Being a Christian & Galatians Introduction
3	F16	Galatians
4	F23	1 Thessalonians
5	M2 5% Article #2 "Levison"	Philippians
6	M9	1 Corinthians
7	M16 10% Ridderbos / Macaskill due	1 Corinthians
8	M23	2 Corinthians
9	M30	2 Corinthians & Ephesians
	A5-9	Spring Break
10	A13 10% Williams rev.	Ephesians & Colossians
11		

	A20	Philippians
12	A27	Pastorals
13	M4 30% Research paper	Philemon; peak @ Romans; Review
	M11 40% Final	Final Exam (3hours proctored @ home)

Course Objectives Related to MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes

<u>MDiv* Student Learning Outcomes</u>		<u>Rubric</u>	<u>Mini-Justification</u>
<p><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></p> <p><i>*As the MDiv is the core degree at RTS, the MDiv rubric will be used in this syllabus.</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong ➤ Moderate ➤ Minimal ➤ None 	
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lengthy exegetical essay. 2. Informal class presentations of outcomes to group discussion 3. Book reviews
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Close interaction with the letters of Paul. 2. Instructor to address key elements of key Greek words. 3. Cultural background to the letters covered in detail.
Reformed Theology	Significant knowledge of Reformed theology and practice, with emphasis on the Westminster Standards.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reformed doctrine is highlighted in dialogue with current alternative perspectives.
Sanctification	Demonstrates a love for the Triune God that aids the student's sanctification.	Moderate	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Singing worship song in class. 2. Group discussion of how text applies to life at various points.
Desire for Worldview	Burning desire to conform all of life to the Word of God.	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A main focus of the text is how to think like a Christian (see above).
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.)	Strong	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study of Ephesians 1 highlights the way predestination should be winsomely held and articulated.

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-Xns.	Moderate/ Strong	1. Application at various points will highlight how a given passage may best be taught. 2. Worship songs of ancient origin. 3. Practical illustrations of instructor's experience.
--------------------------	--	---------------------	--

Zoom Policy

Your professor may allow you to Zoom into class or watch Zoom recordings for excused absences based on the professor's discretion and subject to the availability of equipment. Students should contact their professor well in advance of the class meeting. For a third absence the Registrar should be consulted. Your professor may require additional interactive assignments to offset the absence of classroom interaction. Sync or Remote Live courses have priority for the limited Zoom equipment.

Extension Policy

All assignments and exams are to be completed by the deadlines announced in this syllabus or in class.

Extensions for assignments and exams due within the normal duration of the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. Extensions of two weeks or less beyond the date of the last deadline for the course must be approved beforehand by the Professor. A grade penalty may be assessed.

Extensions of greater than two weeks but not more than six weeks beyond the last deadline for the course may be granted in extenuating circumstances (i.e. illness, family emergency). For an extension of more than two weeks the student must request an Extension Request Form from the Registrar's Office. The request must be approved by the Professor and the Academic Dean. A grade penalty may be assessed. (RTS Catalog p. 46 and RTS Atlanta Student Handbook p. 18)

Any incompletes not cleared six weeks after the last published due date for course work will be converted to a failing grade. Professors may have the failing grade changed to a passing grade by request. (RTS Catalog p. 49)