

We go to the epistles again and again for Christian theology; they are loaded with it. But one must always keep in mind that they were not primarily written to expound Christian theology. It is always theology applied to or directed toward a particular need.

Common Hermeneutics for Epistles

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Grasp the text in their town- read letter in one setting

w/o chpt/verses; main themes

Who was the author

What was his background

When did he write

What was the nature of his ministry

What relationship w/ audience

Why was he writing

Who was the biblical audience

What were their circumstances


What were their relationship w/ God

What was occurring @ the time the book was written

What historical/ cultural factors shed light

Common Hermeneutics for Epistles

- Cloaks to Troas (2 Tim 4:13)– command, yes!
- 2Tim 2:3– soldiering
- Consistency? Theological Baggage; results in selective application
- 2 Tim 4 or 2-Tim OK?; 1 Tim 5:23? Stomach aches? Welch's 1st C? But 2 Tim 3:14-16 only to Tim?
- 1 Cor 11-60's hair
- 1 Cor 14– vs. 34-35, yes all time; vs. 1-5, 26-33, 39-40 limited to 1st C?
- Calvin's around– 1 Cor 10:1-3; 2 Pet 2:20-22; Heb 6:4-6
- Arminian's- Rom 8:30, 9:18-24, Gal 1:15; Eph 1:4-5;

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- How to get around difficult texts, not what is the text saying to me— what message has the Holy Spirit for me/us?

Basic guidelines

A text ***can not mean*** what it never could have meant to its author or their readers---

Example--1 Cor 13:10 gifts- NT non-existent yet
God's word to us is the same as his Word to them

Example— 1 Cor 3:16-17

1 Cor 6: 1-11

Exegesis must come 1st

Application

Comparable situations/ particulars; make an application—Rom 3:23!; Eph 2:8; or Col 3: 12; 1 Cor 1-4; Phil 1:27-2:18; **1 Cor 6:1-11—particulars change?**

Extended Application-1 Corinthians 3:16-17; 2 Cor 6:14 Exegesis? (yoke, marriage, idols)

Particulars not comparable— 1st C versus 21st C

Example; or chaps 8-10; Three issues- **pagans neighbors feast** (8:10, 10:14-22; **Cor's challenge Paul's apostolic authority**-9:1-23; **food sacrificed to idols-10**

Applications

Do other non-21st C passages speak to us in the 21st C

1 Cor 5:1-11 / 1 Cor 11 / Gal 6:12

Principle

Exegesis

Principle not timeless— limited to comparable situations

Stumbling block- not just offensive but...?

Demonic representational

Food— 1 Cor 10:23-11:1 (Rom 14 / Col 2:16-23)

Applications

- Cultural changes- clothes; ties; women's dress; etc., etc.
- What the epistle specifically indicates as indifference must stay that way-food, drink, days
- Matters of indifference are cultural when not inherently immoral
- Sin-lists in the Epistles— Rom 1:29-31; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9-10; 2 Tim 3:2-4 do not delineate 1st C issues— not indifferent, just wrong! Nor included in the imperatives— Rom 12, Eph 5, Col 3

Cultural Relativity-Problems!

- Epistles- occasional documents; conditioned by circumstances of 1st C, addressed 1st specific situations
- Application distant— Paul's cloak from Carpus's house
- Texts conditioned but applicable for comparable settings
- Some left in 1st C or not?

Some left in 1st C or not? Guidelines

1) I.D. central core of Bible

not canon w/in canon!

fallenness of humanity

redemption plan thru humanities history

Christ imperative

But— holy kiss? Head coverings?

2) NT inherently immoral, yes!

1 Cor 6:9-10, wrong see vs. 11

Some left in 1st C or not? Guidelines

3) NT consistent witness reflect differences?

Love thru out; non-retaliation; wrongness strife,

4) Political Rome— consistent? Rom 13:1-5; 1 Pet

2:13-14 vs. Rev chaps 13-18

5) Retention of wealth- consistent? Lk 12: 33, 18:22

vs. 1 Tim 6:17-19

Do not do an exegesis for consistency!!!!!!!!!!

But all circumstances Christian charity must be exercised