



The Book of Romans: A Study in Justification and Sanctification

Douglas R. Shearer

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Over the course of the last forty years or so, expository teaching has fallen into disfavor among Gen-Xers and Gen-Yers. It's a trend rooted in the postmodern mindset that has become so chic among American and European intellectuals. Fifty years ago it was "de rigueur" for a "Western Lit" college professor to ask his students some such question: "What's Shakespeare's meaning in Act V, scene 3 of King Lear, when the king suddenly appears on stage with the lifeless body of Cordelia in his arms? What terrible truth is Shakespeare telling us?" Today, however, he no longer asks his students that question. Instead, he asks them, "What does Act V, scene 3, mean to you?" In short, it's no longer the author's meaning that's pivotal; it's the meaning - whatever it might be - that his readers give to it. And, quite frequently, there's more to it than even that: it's not just that Shakespeare's meaning isn't considered pivotal, it's no longer even probed - often with a caveat from the professor that doing so will prove not just pointless, but detrimental. Why? Because probing the author's intentions will undermine the reader's quest for personal identity and "self-authentication." Think about it! If during the Renaissance, "man became the measure of all things," today "the individual has become the measure of all things" - with one person's opinion, however ill informed and poorly grounded it might be, no less valid than anyone else's. And that same mindset is, I'm afraid, becoming all too prevalent within the Evangelical community - especially among the so-called "emerging churches." All too often, for example, it's not "What does Paul mean in Romans 2:2-16?," it's "What does Romans 2:2-16 mean to you?" This book is an attempt to recover for Evangelicals the joy and passion of expository teaching; to learn how an expository study of the Book of Romans reveals rich veins of spiritual truth that would otherwise remain hidden; that it's the text itself that's all important, not taken out of context, but imbedded in context. Verse by verse a reader will follow Paul's train of thought as he reveals the mystery of justification - how God has reconciled his holiness with his mercy. In addition, a verse by verse study of Romans 1:16 - 4:5 provides all-important cues to the interpretation of what many theologians consider the most difficult three chapters in the New Testament, Romans 9-11.

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