

HERMENEUTICS	Page 1
HERM005	a Grace Notes course

a **Grace Notes** course

Hermeneutics

Source Materials:

“Hermeneutics: the Science and Art of Biblical Interpretation”

Drue Freeman, Pastor, Trinity Bible Church, Oklahoma City, OK

“A Syllabus of Studies in Hermeneutics”, Rollin Thomas Chafer

HERM005

adapted for Grace Notes training by Warren Doud

Grace Notes

Web Site: <http://www.gracenotes.info> E-mail: wdoud@gracenotes.info

Hermeneutics

A Grace Notes course

Lesson	
HERM 001	Lessons 1 and 2
HERM 002	Lessons 3 and 4
HERM 003	Lesson 5
HERM 004	Lesson 6
HERM 005	Lessons 7 and 8
HERM 006	Lesson 9 and 10
HERM 007	Lesson 11
HERM 008	Lesson 12
HERM 009	Lesson 13
HERM 010	Lesson 14

Lesson 7 - The Protestant System Of Hermeneutics - Grammatical Perspectives

Philology is a technical term meaning a "friend of words." It refers to a love of learning and desire to study the disciplines of language. Since the Bible is made up of words, there is need for the technical and comparative study of the words that are used in the Bible. The student of the Word of God must pay careful attention to the specific words and the context in which the Holy Spirit placed them into the Scripture. While it is possible to gain some tremendous insights into God's Word from a study of the words used in various translations, one must be very careful of trying to develop a theology from anything other than the original languages. The disciple with no training in the original languages will need to rely on the work of others in many of these areas.

The first principle we will consider is that we should approach the Scriptures believing that

God's Word is Basically Literal. The Literal Approach to Scripture recognizes the natural or usual speech constructions and implications of a particular writing or expression. It follows the ordinary and apparent sense of the words that are used in their historical context. This is not letterist approach that reads meaning into letters but instead is the usual method of interpretation of any literature. We approach God's Word literally because we find that the statements and descriptions He gives of the Messiah had literal fulfillment in Jesus Christ. If there are spiritual meanings that come from signs, symbols, parables and the like they still depend on the literal strata of a language. Only in a literal approach is there any control against abuse of the interpretation of the Scriptures. The Literal Approach does not overlook figures of speech, symbols, types, and the like.

The practice of the literal is done by the Study of Words which is our second principle. Words establish the context of a body of literature. In the study of words, you will find that some are

HERMENEUTICS	Page 3
HERM005	a Grace Notes course

technical or very specific in their meaning while others are non-technical or general in their meanings. It makes sense that the non-technical words should be interpreted in view of the technical words that surround them. This is actually a specific application of letting Scripture interpret Scripture and the clear passage interpret the obscure.

As we study the words we look at the way they were formed which is called "etymology." This type of study can give tremendous insight into the meaning of the word. For example, the Greek word PARAKALEO is formed from the word PARA meaning "alongside" and KALEO meaning "to call." The word itself then means to "call alongside." It is a word variously translated as "comfort," "encourage," or "exhort." It implies though a call to another person into a relationship that is "arm-in-arm" with you. There are many good lexicons available that explain the way the words were formed.

We also must study words comparatively referring to how they relate to other words. This will involve Concordance studies. An exhaustive Concordance will show every place a given word is used. Many also have number codes that tell which Greek or Hebrew words have been translated by that particular word. Strong's Concordance is probably the best for the beginning student. It is also valuable for the advanced student. The Comparative Study of words also considers synonyms (words with similar or identical meanings) and antonyms which are words with opposite meanings. There are very few pure synonyms, so the careful student will find beautiful subtleties of meaning that can greatly enhance his understanding of the Word.

It is also important to study words culturally meaning their significance to the culture that used them in the era in which they were used. There is a trap of not applying a correct Biblical chronology to the study of the words. We must realize that words change meanings over the

course of time. The meanings also tend to go from specific to general. This principle was espoused by Martin Luther and John Calvin and sought to determine the original designation of a particular word. In Latin it is known as the *usus loquendi*.

When possible, the serious student may also consider cognate languages, which are languages of the same linguistic family. However, one must beware of placing too much emphasis on this study.

The Literal Approach to Scripture is also practiced by considering the grammatical structure of sentences because words form sentences. Sentences are units of thought. The research is the same as for the study of words. One must consider the Context in which the sentence is found. The immediate context considers the sentences and paragraphs in closest proximity to the one under consideration. The intermediate context considers the book in which the sentence is placed and the remote context considers the rest of the Bible.

In our study of sentences we must also know what type of language is under consideration. It may be "Analytic" which depends on the word order to communicate the meaning. Hebrew and English are examples of "Analytic" languages. It may also be "Agglutinative" which is considered a "synthetic" language where case endings are primarily used to convey the intended meaning.

The study of parallel passages is also important to the Literal Approach to the Scripture. Just because one finds wording similar to that found in another passage, the passages still may not be parallel. The issue should not be forced.

One should also look at similar concepts. An example of this would be to study the "Resurrection of the Dead" as found in 1Corinthians 15 and Revelation 20.

The Literal Approach also considers the Literary Genre of the passage under

HERMENEUTICS	Page 4
HERM005	a Grace Notes course

consideration. A genre is a standardized pattern of writing, such as poetry and prose. The Literary Genre makes us consider various figures of speech, such as in Revelation 5:5 where the Lord is called the "lion" of Judah. Jesus Christ is not a literal "lion," so the figure of speech represents a trait that He literally possesses. Scripture also uses Parables and even an Allegory (Gal 4:24). Recognizing the Literary Genre does not touch the literal hermeneutical principles, but instead clearly identifies figurative language and literally interprets. Song of Solomon is clearly loaded with figurative language, but its interpretation must be first considered literally.

It is extremely important that the interpreter of Scripture have some knowledge of Biblical history and chronology in particular. This is important in understanding the Biblical culture customs and rituals. Revelation comes in and through a cultural form and in some cases the principles taught are transcultural. It is an art determining when.

The student of God's word must come to the Scriptures with some basic questions. As we approach any passage we must seek to answer the "Who, what, when, where, why and how." After those questions are answered, there are some secondary questions we would ask such as, "How does this apply to me or the ones I am to teach?" and "Are there any conditions to these principles such as special circumstances?"

The student of God's Word must approach His Word with Intellectual Honesty, seeking to know what God has said. There are many hindrances to correct interpretation including the desire for the applause of men, vanity, flattery, fear, and inconsistent or unbalanced study (like only studying topics and not studying through a book). Every time we go into the Word we should submit our biases to the absolute standard of truth, the Word of God, because only His Word is Truth (John 17:17). We also must seek to learn from Him in order

to do His will (John 7:17) and not simply as an academic exercise. The Pharisees demonstrate what happens when we leave the desire for a relationship with the Living God out of our study of His Word (also read John 5:39-47). Let us pray, pray and pray.

The Sequence Of Interpretation

The first step is to analyze the words realizing that the technical or specific words set the context and that the non-technical or general words are interpreted by the context.

The next step is to analyze the grammar recognizing the word functions that are forced by the words themselves or the grammatical construction. These set the context and serve as the basis to interpret the words that can have optional grammatical functions. In other words we are letting the clear interpret the questionable.

We must also interpret based on the contexts, looking first at the immediate context in which we find the word, namely within the sentence or paragraph, then at the intermediate context which refers to its location within the book in which it is found and then at the remote context which considers the rest of the Scripture. Correct interpretation will not violate any of these contexts.

Lesson 8 - The Doctrinal Use Of The Bible

The Theological or Doctrinal Interpretation extends the study of the grammar to its full significance. It is a Synoptic or Comparative view of all the Biblical data on a given subject. Theology must be built upon general hermeneutical principles.

Principles Of Doctrinal Studies

The Theologian is a redeemed man standing in the midst of Divine Revelation. Thus he must be committed to understanding the Word of God. This should not be a dry, abstract, or impersonal investigation, but one must seek to set personal biases aside.

HERMENEUTICS	Page 5
HERM005	a Grace Notes course

The main themes of the Bible are God, man, Jesus Christ and the Christian life. At the heart of the Bible is Jesus Christ and Salvation. The Bible is often mistreated when people try and make it a handbook for politics.

Theology must rest on the Literal Interpretation, which does not overlook figurative language. The Main Burden of Theology must totally include the theology of the New Testament. Determining what God's Word has to say through exegesis (reading out) must be prior to any system of theology. The System has to be built up exegetically, brick by brick. Of necessity, one will have to use the rules of logic within this system, but the theologian must be careful to not extend his doctrines beyond the Scriptural evidence because his evidence is Scripture itself.

The Theologian is striving for a system, which is a group of interrelated assertions. Therefore, there must be a systematic gathering of data from the entire Bible before it is interrelated into a coherent system. It is helpful to know the history of philosophy and the history of theological development. Liberal theologians claim there are many systems of theology found within the Bible, yet such would be confusing which is not a characteristic of God (1 Cor 14:33). Conservative scholars believe that there is one interpretation of a given passage while there may be many applications.

Proper Theological development of necessity must have proof texts given that are the result of the correct understanding of the Scriptures. This means that the exegesis "reading out" must be done according to basic principles of interpretation that properly recognize the context. Liberal theologians do not believe one needs a proof text to establish theology, but they even use a proof text to try and prove that we shouldn't use them (2Cor 3:6 Letter kills, but the Spirit gives life).

What is not a matter of clear cut revelation should not be made a matter of creed or faith. This leads to making moral judgments without

the benefit of Scripture, in effect defining sin. In Romans 5:13, it says, "sin is not imputed where there is no law." Thus, when man starts defining law apart from God's Word, he is playing God. What is specifically spelled out as sin, we can and should learn and apply.

The Theologian must also keep the practical nature of the Word in mind. There is plenty of information on living the Christian Life. The Scriptures do not deal specifically with every little thing or circumstance we will deal with in life, but they will touch upon every aspect of our lives by means of principles.

The Theologian must also recognize his responsibility to the Universal Church. There has clearly been enough division within Christ's Body through the centuries over so-called "doctrinal" issues to last us for eternity. For the Theologian to present information to the Church that is not based upon sound principles of hermeneutics is irresponsible and denotes a lack of love.

Exercises for HERM005

1. Why would we accept a principle that says we would first consider words to be basically literal in their meaning?
2. How do we establish the literal meaning?
3. What value can there be in the study of how words are formed?
4. What is the value of comparing words?
5. Why would we want to study the grammatical structure of sentences?
6. Why would the context be important in the interpretation of the word?
7. Why would we want to study parallel passages and similar concepts?
8. Why would history and culture also impact our study?
9. What are some hindrances to the correct interpretation of Scripture?
10. What is the doctrinal study of the Bible designed to do?
11. What is the Theologian?
12. What are the main themes of the Bible?
13. What must theology rest on?

HERMENEUTICS	Page 6
HERM005	a Grace Notes course

14. What is the Theologian striving for? How is it built?
15. What is a requirement for a proper theological system?
16. Consider how legalism occurs when one goes beyond the Word.
17. What should not be made a matter of creed or faith? Why?
18. Why should we keep in mind the question, "How then should we live?"
19. Why should the Theologian not present principles to the Church that are not firmly grounded in Scripture?