The Importance of Rhetoric for Understanding Paul’s Letters - 3

Review of Week 1

- Rhetoric is the art of persuasion
- Important in 1st century because most learning and discourse was verbal (low literacy)
- Ancient culture was highly emotive; they wore their emotions on their sleeves
- Rhetoric consists of 3 steps to the argument
  - Ethos – establishes relationship between author and audience
  - Logos – refers to main arguments of a discourse, which are the central act of persuasion.
  - Pathos – appeal to deeper emotions to commit audience to the arguments.

Review of Week 2

- Three types of rhetoric
  - Forensic – argument for and against, used in law court for past events
  - Deliberative – advice and consent, used in political discourse on future beliefs/actions
  - Epideictic – public praise of person or thing (including idea)
- Combining 3 steps (ethos, logos, and pathos) and 3 types (forensic, deliberative and epideictic) of rhetoric by Paul to make his argument.
  - Exordium. Beginning where the speaker develops relationship with audience. Paul uses first few verses of letter. Note, this also gives a preview of what is coming
  - Narratio. The facts of the discourse. Good example of Paul establishing his credentials and authority with facts in Galatians.
  - Thesis = the proposition to be maintained or proved (OED)
  - Propositio. The main point; proposition or thesis. Hint; find the thesis statement in a letter and you know what everything else is about. This is helpful in understanding Paul.

Weeks 3 and 4 – application of Rhetoric in Romans

Overview of Romans.

- Starts with epistolary prescript, grace/peace, exhortium
- Propositio, Romans 1:16-18 (37:20) is the thesis statement of Romans.
- 2 kinds of arguments
  - Probatio. Arguments in favor for the proposition.
  - Refutatio. Arguments against.
Peroatio. 3 things; brief summary of main arguments, amplify crucial argument for emphasis, bind the audience through an appeal to the deeper emotions.

The final summing up to “seal the deal”. Uses Ephesians 6:10-20 (full armor of God) as example.

epistolary = carried on by or suited to the letter (OED)

Rhetorical Structure of Romans

Expanded epistolary opening;

Addresser and addressee, Chap 1:1-7a

Epistolary greeting, Chap 1:7b

1 Exordium/epistolary wish prayer, Chap 1:8-10
2 Narratio, Chap 1:1-15
3 Proposito, Chap 1:16-17
4 Probatio, Chap 1:18 – 8:39
   a. Argument 1: The Bankruptcy of and God’s Judgment on Pagan Religious Experience
      i. Part 1: Chap 1:18-32 The wrath of God against Gentile wickedness
      ii. Part 2: Chap 2:1-16 A critique of a judgmental Gentile Hypocrite
   b. Argument 2: Censoring a censorious Jewish teacher. Chap 2:17 to 3:20
   d. Argument 3: Abraham as the forefather of a universal religion, of those who obtain righteousness by grace thru faith. Chap 4:1-25
   e. Argument 4: Blessed consequences for all who have been set right by grace thru faith. Chap 5:1-11
   f. Argument 5: Adam as the forefather of universal sin, suffering and death. Christ as origin of universal grace, salvation and life. Chap 5:12-21
      i. Shall we go on sinning so grace may increase? Chap 6:1-14
      ii. Shall we go on sinning since we are under grace not law? Chap 6:15-7:6
   g. Argument 6: Shall sin, death and the law continue now the Christ has come?
      i. Shall we say the law is sin? Retelling Adam’s tale. Chap 7:7-13b
      ii. Retelling the present human condition – life outside Christ Chap 7:14-25
   h. Argument 7: Life in the spirit now. Chap 8:1-17
      i. Argument 8: Life in Christ in glory (and concluding doxological praise). Chap 8:8-39
5 Refutatio Chap 9:1 – 11:36
   a. Argument 9: If salvation is by grace through faith in Christ and the law is obsolete, has God abandoned his first chosen people? Has the word of God failed? Does Israel have a future? Note another doxology to conclude the refutation. Chap 9:1-11:36

doxology = liturgical formula of praise to God (OED)
Ethics Chap 12:1 – 15:13

b. Argument 11: Unifying praxis and witness, submission to authorities, payment of debts. Chap 13:1-14
d. Final greetings and instructions: Paul encourages majority Gentile Christians to bind themselves to the minority Jewish Christians in Christ. Chap 16

*Ethics* = set of principles or morals *(OED)*

*praxis* = accepted practice, custom *(OED)* Contrast orthopraxy with orthodoxy.

Final thoughts from Ben Witherington (his peroration);

- Paul is preaching through an orator
- Perhaps we should describe these writings as the sermons of Paul instead of the letters of Paul

**Discussion**

Does the beginning of Romans 1 use a rhetorical start? And if so what are specifics?

What is the thesis of Romans?

What about the thesis of 1 Corinthians?

What about Galatians thesis?

Why lead with positive arguments in probation?

Which chapters of Romans are the probatio?
How many arguments does Paul present in the probation?

Thoughts on Argument 5 (first Adam/last Adam)? Chap 5:12-21

Any interesting thoughts on other probation arguments?

Which chapters of Romans are the refutatio?

Why does Paul use doxologies at the end on Chapters 8 and 11?

Why do you think Paul ends Romans with a discussion of ethics? (Chap 12-15)

What is the difference between orthopraxy and orthodoxy?

How does Paul deal with orthopraxy and orthodoxy in his discussion on ethics?