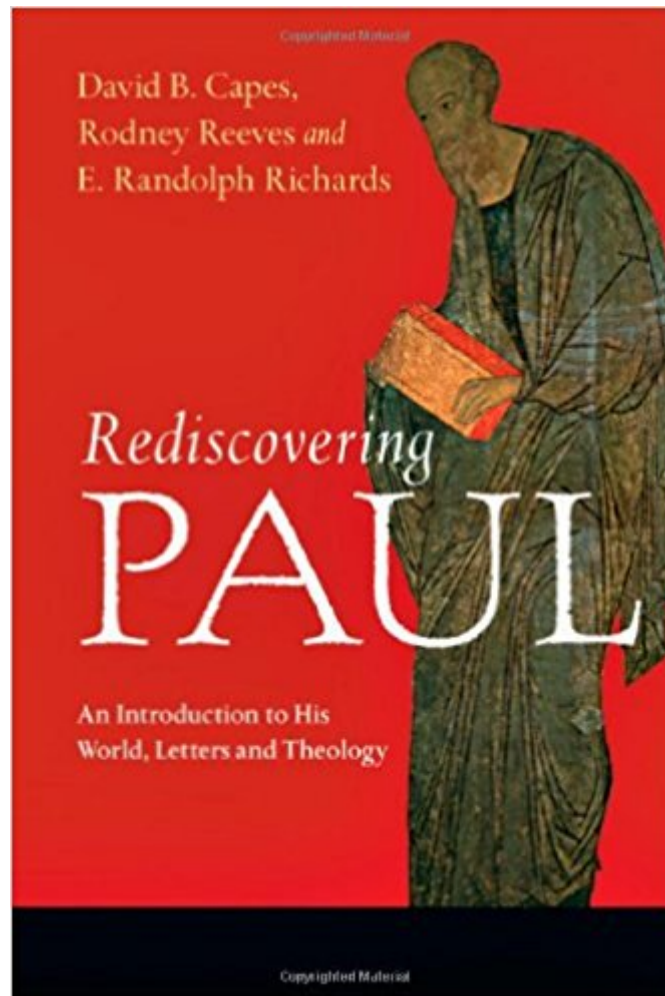




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Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction To His World, Letters And Theology



Synopsis

For some of us, the apostle Paul is like a distant uncle. We've heard he's pretty important. We've read the good parts of his letters. But sometimes he comes across as prickly and unpredictable. Not someone you'd like to hang out with at a coffee shop. He'd raise his voice, try to convert the barista, and we'd want to slink out the back door. For a mid-afternoon latte, we'd prefer Jesus over Paul. But actually, this is the guy who, from Ephesus to Athens, was the talk of the marketplace and the raconteur of the Parthenon. Maybe it's time to give Paul a break, let go of some stereotypes and try to get to know him on his own terms. If that's where you are, Rediscovering Paul is your guide. This is a book that helps us find Paul again—holding forth in the marketplace of Corinth, working with a secretary in framing his letter to the Romans, or pastoring the messy emerging churches of Philippi and Thessalonica. Drawing on the best of contemporary scholarship, honed by teaching and conversing with today's students, Rediscovering Paul is a textbook that rises above the rest.

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Customer Reviews

David B. Capes (PhD, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is professor of New Testament in the School of Christian Thought at Houston Baptist University, where he was founding dean of the Honors College. He has authored, coauthored or coedited books such as Rediscovering Paul, Old Testament Yahweh Texts in Paul's Christology, The Footsteps of Jesus in the Holy Land, The Last Eyewitness, Rebecca's Children, The Voice of Hebrews and The Voice of Romans. In addition to contributing to a number of dictionaries, encyclopedias and professional journals, he served as the

lead scholar on a new Bible translation, The Voice Bible. Since the early 1990s, Capes has been active in interfaith dialogue in Houston and co-hosts a radio show called A Show of Faith on TALK RADIO 950 KPRC Houston. He has served as pastor of several churches and has participated in a variety of professional organizations, including the Society of Biblical Literature, the Institute for Biblical Research and the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion. Rodney Reeves (PhD, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is dean of The Courts Redford College of Theology and Ministry and professor of biblical studies at Southwest Baptist University, both in Bolivar, Missouri. Previously a pastor with churches in Arkansas and Texas, Reeves is author or coauthor of A Genuine Faith: How to Follow Jesus Today, Spirituality According to Paul: Imitating the Apostle of Christ and Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to his World, Letters and Theology. His articles have appeared in journals such as Perspectives in Religious Studies, Biblical Illustrator, Southwestern Journal of Theology and Preaching. E. Randolph Richards (PhD, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) is dean and professor of biblical studies in the School of Ministry at Palm Beach Atlantic University. He is a popular speaker and has authored and coauthored dozens of books and articles, including Paul Behaving Badly, A Little Book for New Bible Scholars, Rediscovering Jesus, Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes, Rediscovering Paul, The Story of Israel, and Paul and First-Century Letter Writing. Early on in their ministry he and his wife Stacia were appointed as missionaries to east Indonesia, where he taught for eight years at an Indonesian seminary. Missions remain on the hearts of Randy and Stacia. Randy leads mission trips and conducts missionary training workshops and regularly leads tours of the Holy Land, Turkey, Greece, and Italy. He has served as interim pastor of numerous churches and is currently a teaching pastor. He and Stacia reside in Palm Beach, Florida.

Enjoyed studying the life and ministry of Paul with Capes. He provides some intriguing insights on predestination and election, and presents his views in a very humble way, while never arguing against the understandings of others.

Great book, Gives incredible insight into the life and world of Paul. Also provides great insight into the structure and form of his letters and how they came to be. This is a must read for anyone looking to dig deeper into the scriptures and looking to develop a better understanding of who Paul was.

Great package

Was an ok interesting read.

Lots of detail...

Paul. He's a fascinating figure. Who is the man and what shaped him? What can we learn from him today? There are many fine books out there about Paul and many fine ones from a Christian perspective, but now we have an extremely thorough one that seems to hit Paul from all angles and the church owes Reeves, Richards, and Capes a debt of gratitude for this excellent gift. It is a book that is highly readable and with solid content. While it could be seen as a primer of sorts with further reading at the end of each chapter to encourage the reader to study further, it could easily be seen as a reliable guide in itself and one who reads this will have an excellent understanding of the world of Paul. The book also includes several sidebar statements where the authors ask about a claim "So what?" Students often want to know what difference that something that can be often thought to be a tangential point. Isn't this just something that nerdy scholars would care about? What difference will it make in my own life. The authors want you to know what difference it does make. There also are "What's More" sections. In these, the authors add in additional details and sometimes even post ideas that would be challenging to our modernistic ways of thinking and say "Maybe we should take Paul a little bit more seriously here." It is incredible how thorough this book is. I particularly enjoyed the first part with reading about the honor-shame culture. This is a favorite area of mine to study and I wish more people spoke about it and I'm encouraged to know that NT students who are beginning their studies will be learning about this fascinating area. In fact, there are a number of times in the book I was thinking an area had been left out. For instance, when it comes to the section on the writing of letters I knew I was getting to the end and was thinking "What would be really nice is if they had included something on how much it cost to write one of these letters." What do you know? Right towards the end there's a section on the cost of writing the letters. The authors also spend time going through each book of Paul's. Some of these are handled in sections, such as the Pastorals. Some of them have their own chapters, which is fitting due to the influence of these books. The student who comes to the text will have a greater knowledge of all of the epistles of Paul as a result. It rounds off with a look at Paul's theology as well as an excellent look at how it is that Paul's letters came to be collected and made into a canon. The final section is on Paul's legacy. What difference has Paul made? How has he been seen in history? What does he have to say to our world today? It's hard to think that a book could be so thorough on the life of Paul and his work and impact,

but indeed, it is. I absolutely stand behind this book and hope that it is put into the hands of students going into ministry. The student who reads this book will be better equipped to understand Paul the man, the works of Paul, and be able to even make a defense for the works of Paul today. Even better, he will be able to take his own personal holiness much more seriously and consider how Paul is to have an impact on his life today. Hopefully he'll have the same focus that Paul had, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. This is a must read book for all interested in Paul. In Christ, Nick Peters
Deeper Waters Christian Ministries

Rediscovering Paul: An Introduction to His World, Letters and Theology. David B. Capes, Rodney Reeves and E. Randolph Richards. InterVarsity Press, 2007. 350 pp. \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-8303-3941-4. The history of Pauline studies could be described as a tempestuous ocean of ideas and theories. Just as there was a search for the "real or historical Jesus" there has been a search for the "real or historical Paul". For a layman who has no formal training in Pauline studies, as well as for the beginning student, or, for that matter, anybody who is not familiar with the wealth of material that has been written in Pauline studies in the last 2000 years, it is difficult to find an introductory level book that not only provides the necessary historical and cultural background for one to begin studying Paul, but also introduces the various views in the numerous debates. As such, the book by Capes, Reeves and Richards is like a lighthouse lighting up the treacherous waters so that boats can navigate safely, through the rocks, to the harbour. In order to get an idea as to why this book is such an important introduction to Paul we will explain, first of all, the proposed purpose for the book, give an outline of the content that is covered by the authors, and then give our conclusions as to the worth of the book. The authors explain, in the introduction to their book, that the purpose of their book is to "present an overview of Paul that gathers together context, content and theology with the goal of answering that perennial question of students: 'So what?'" They conclude by reminding us that their goal "has been to help serious readers of the New Testament rediscover Paul within his or her world and consider what the apostle to the Gentiles can say to our world." So much has been written about Paul, and the Pauline Epistles, suggesting different ways of understanding Paul that attempting to work one's way through the waste to find a helpful understanding of the great apostle can seem like a daunting task. Due to all that has been said about Paul the notion of "rediscovering" the real or historical Paul is an accurate description of both what is needed, and what this book has done. The authors take us on an adventure through time to walk in the world of the apostle Paul. In 350 pages they do what many scholars have only dreamed of doing.

The purpose of this book is to give the beginner, who is serious about wanting to understand the writings of the apostle Paul, the historical, geographical and cultural baggage that is necessary for a proper understanding of the Pauline Epistles. In order to accomplish their goal they begin by setting the stage. The first three chapters deal with the historical background that we need to understand before we even begin to explore Paul's letters. The first chapter deals with life in Paul's world. The authors explore social standards, the importance of honor and rituals, as well as the effect on Paul and the people that he interacted with of the interaction between the Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures. The second chapter deals with customs related to letter-writing in the first century. This chapter is fundamental for the rest of the book as they will hinge many of their arguments concerning the redaction of the Pauline epistles and the variation in style upon the points that are brought up in this chapter. They argue that due to the fact that secretaries were commonly hired in order to write letters, even for short personal letters, explains why some of Paul's letters vary in style and language. If Paul used different secretaries when in different cities, this would account for the difference in style. (This, and related historical facts, are used to show that there is no reason to reject Pauline authorship of any of the 13 Pauline epistles. The only place where the authors seem to stray from this argument, and accept the notion that a difference of style demonstrates conclusively a different author, is concerning the author of the book of Hebrews. They allow that the book of Hebrews is not Pauline as it is anonymous, and the letter was so clearly non-Pauline in style. (Ibid., 290.) This one slip could be excused as being the result of peer-pressure, "No modern scholar accepts it as Pauline. (Ibid.)" Of course so broad a statement is just begging to be refuted. Cf. David Alan Black, "Who Wrote Hebrews? The Internal and External Evidence Reexamined", in *Faith & Mission*, 18/2 (spring 2001), 3-26.) who claims that the evidence actually demonstrates that there is a great amount of similarity in style and diction between the other Pauline epistles and Hebrews (p. 16), and the differences are probably due to Paul's secretary (notice the coherent application of Capes, Reeves and Richards argument for the authenticity of Paul's other epistles). Black also notes that there is a great amount of similarity between the theological content of the Paul's other letters and Hebrews (p. 21). Black concludes that due to the internal and external evidence the best course of action in our view is to accept that Hebrews was authored by Paul the apostle, possibly with the assistance of an amanuensis such as Luke (p. 22). There is, therefore, at least one modern scholar that accepts Hebrews as a Pauline letter. Furthermore, Black consistently uses the argument used in support of the Pauline authorship of the other letters, by Capes, Reeves and Richards, to support his argument for the Pauline authorship of Hebrews. Personally, I tend to

agree with Black's argument.) In chapter three the authors consider Paul's conversion experience and attempt to set up a working timeline of Paul's ministry. Chapters 4-9 deal with the Pauline corpus. In each chapter the authors outline the historical and cultural background that motivated the writing of the letters, and influenced what Paul said to each of the churches. They then give a brief summary of the letter (s) discussed and note some of the primary interpretational debates surrounding each letter. The authors attempt to push the reader to further explore the Pauline books, and to decide for themselves how to answer the questions that are raised. For the reader who wishes to push further there are a wealth of footnotes that provide references, as well a list of suggested books at the end of each chapter. As such the book provides for an intellectually stimulating read. The books that they cover are treated in the following order: Galatians in chapter 4, Both Thessalonians letters in chapter 5, the Corinthian letters in chapter 6, Romans in chapter 7, the letters to the other churches in chapter 8 (Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians), and the letters to individuals in chapter 9 (Philemon, 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus). Hebrews is not treated as they do not consider it to be of Pauline origin. The last three chapters provide interesting comments on Paul's theology, his legacy in the first and second century, and how to approach Paul's letters in our contemporary world. The chapter on Paul's Theology (chapter 10) is not an in-depth or extensive study of Paul's theology. The authors note the religious and cultural aspects that would have influenced Paul's theology, and provide a short survey of some of the more stimulating aspects of Paul's thought, noting the debates that continue to proliferate from Paul's thoughts. The chapter on Paul's Legacy (chapter 11) notes the immediate influence that Paul's writings had, and asks the question of how the Pauline corpus was collected and established as canonical. Chapter 12 concludes with suggestions as to how to read Paul today, and how Paul's thoughts can still be applied to today's problems, both within the church and without. All in all this book is a stimulating read. One needs not, and in light of the purpose of this book, should not, agree with everything the authors say. The authors not only accomplish their goal of introducing the reader to Paul, his world and his theology, but they do so in such a way that the reader is stimulated to keep looking. One of the greatest merits of this book is the way that they leave some of their questions unanswered, such that they both demonstrate that many of our questions are very difficult to answer, and give the reader the desire to learn more. This book is bestowed with a good-sized Glossary which will be most helpful for lay-men and beginning students, maps of the Mediterranean world, a large Bibliography that provides plenty of reading for further research, an index of authors, a subject index, and a scripture quotation index. As such this book is

a great place for beginning one's research on just about any subject that is related to Pauline studies. Furthermore the authors provide lists of suggested reading at the end of each chapter, a wealth of references, and interesting text boxes that provide a deeper look into controversial subjects or ask about the importance of the subject that was just covered. I would highly recommend this book to anybody who wishes to read the Pauline epistles and truly understand what they are reading. Not only that, but this book would be a great textbook for an introductory course in Pauline studies or for a New Testament survey course that concentrates on the Pauline Epistles. Every pastor should have a copy of this book in their library, and every student that is studying the New Testament needs this book. This is a great book for anybody that is interested in reading and understanding the Bible.

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