

Foreword

FOR ALL OF ITS predictable patterns and outcomes, life is not without surprises. The same is true of New Testament Studies.

When I first turned my attention to the subject of suffering in Romans (5 and 8), I was surprised by the sparse scholarly treatment of the topic.¹ I remember wondering at the time—namely, the spring of 2012—how much longer it would be before a Pauline specialist filled this lacunae in the secondary literature.

I was nonetheless surprised one year later when I was contacted by Melbourne College of Divinity (now University of Divinity) to examine a doctoral thesis entitled “Suffering in Romans” by Siu Fung Wu. And a pleasant surprise it was. In that study, now Dr. Wu treated with clarity and care the theme of suffering in Romans 5–8 with special reference to 5:1–11 and 8:14–39 and persuasively demonstrated the centrality of the subject in that pivotal portion of Paul’s magisterial letter to Roman believers.

You need not be surprised, however, as to what lies in front of you in this thesis-turned-monograph. Herein you will find a serious, scholarly study that offers salient insight into a long-neglected topic in an oft-interpreted text. Indeed, it is the most comprehensive and persuasive treatment to date.

Far from surprising, Paul regarded suffering to be part and parcel of both the human condition and of Christian commitment.² This investigation of suffering in Romans is made all the more meaningful, at least to my mind, by the fact that Dr. Wu and his family are no strangers to grief and pain. What is more, I harbor the hope that this courageous work will

1. The work of J. Christiaan Beker was an exception. See, e.g., his “Suffering and Triumph in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” 105–19; and “Vision of Hope for a Suffering World,” 26–32. Note now also my “Placing Pain in a Pauline Frame: Considering Suffering in Romans 5 and 8,” 73–86, 228–30.

2. See esp. Rom 5:3; 8:17–25. Cf. also Phil 1:29; 1 Thess 3:3–4. Note, too, 1 Pet 4:12–13; James 1:2; Matt 5:11–12.

enable readers to make better sense (of Paul's understanding of) "the sufferings of this present time" (Rom 8:18), knowing that not even suffering can "separate us [i.e., 'Christians'] from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (8:39; cf. 5:5).

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