

New Testament Survey

Unit 317 – Foundations 3

Week 4 – Session 1
Pauline Epistles (Pastoral)



A. Introduction to 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus

These letters are termed 'pastoral' because they were addressed to two individuals who were involved in pastoring situations. Paul gives advice and commands to both, so it is obvious that they were specifically linked to Paul's own ministry.

Background:

1 Timothy: Paul had a young ministry protégé by the name of Timothy. He was the son of a Gentile father and Jewish mother who had come to faith in Jesus and were personally known to Paul. Paul left Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus, while he himself proceeded to Macedonia. It now appeared that his return would be delayed, so he wrote to Timothy to encourage him, and to give him pastoral advice on conducting the affairs of the church (3:15). He had no doubt instructed him orally before his departure, but the delay meant that Timothy would probably have to deal with situations that could not await the late return of the apostle himself. The letter was written between Paul's first and second imprisonment so a date of 61-63 A.D. is likely.

Titus: Paul had found time to conduct a missionary campaign in Crete. Titus was his helper, and had remained behind when Paul returned to the mainland. Paul now instructs Titus on how to organise the fellowship, to deal with troublemakers, and generally prepare the church for self-administration. Then he was to leave Crete and join Paul in Nicopolis, in the Epirus (western coastal) region of Greece. This letter was probably written between 63-65 A.D.

2 Timothy: Paul's final 'pastoral' letter was written from prison in Rome sometime between 63-65 A.D. Paul had been arrested again, and had no hope of release. This second arrest was after the burning of Rome, and since Nero had made the Christians the scapegoats for that fiasco, there was little likelihood that Paul (or Peter, executed at more or less the same time) could be released. Luke alone is with him, although others are in touch. No one supported him during his first hearing. The letter redounds with loneliness and pathos, the elderly apostle, on the eve of his death, yearning for the presence of his spiritual son. Paul is concerned about conditions among the Christian communities, and shares his concern with Timothy. However, the letter is not all negative feelings. The authority of the apostle to the Gentiles has not been diminished, and his scathing dismissal of the heretics and selfish workers is typically Pauline. Underlying the loneliness is the sense of personal victory - indeed, this apostle cannot be said to have gone in gloom and despair to his fate.

Content: 1 Timothy

- Chapter 1: Timothy must deal decisively with perverters of the gospel. This he can do by virtue of his call to teach sound doctrine.
- Chapter 2: Pray for all men, particularly public figures and governing authorities. The role and demeanour of women in the church.
- Chapter 3: Qualifications of *episkopoi* and *diakonoi* (elders and deacons) – church leaders. The church is custodian and supporter of the truth.
- Chapter 4: Unlike those who depart from the faith, Timothy must give himself to godliness and profitable Christian service and lead by example.
- Chapter 5: How to deal with various groups in the church: elders, older women, younger women, widows, etc. Concern for Timothy's spiritual and physical health.
- Chapter 6: A variety of matters, including the demeanour of slaves, warnings against covetousness and a challenge to fight for the truth.

Content: Titus

- Chapter 1: Qualifications of an *episkopos*. He must be able to cope with the false teachers.
- Chapter 2: How to deal with various groups: older and younger men and women, and slaves. All these must 'adorn the doctrine' (apply the teaching; live out the truth).
- Chapter 3: Believers and society: apply themselves to "good works" (7 times), not profitless arguments over controversy. Personal matters.

Content: 2 Timothy

- Chapter 1: Paul and Timothy's spiritual histories. Both are called to be guardians of the truth.
- Chapter 2: Many are slipping away, but Timothy must be a good soldier, a true workman, and a skilful teacher.
- Chapter 3: There are many unscrupulous and unholy men now, and more will come in the future. Timothy must follow Paul's example, and use Scripture properly, and he will be able to reprove such men.
- Chapter 4: Preach the word while you can! My time is short! Come to me quickly!

The nature of the false teaching:

All three letters warn against false teachers. Although the localities of the addressees differ, there is much in common between the descriptions that allow us to determine a common trend. Paul was dealing with more than local aberrations: he was dealing with a tendency in the church in general.

The false teaching revealed the following characteristics:

1. It was taught by **those who desired to be teachers of the Law**, whose stock in trade was myths and genealogies (1 Tim 1:4, 7; Titus 3:9).
2. Some are **men of the circumcision, who teach for personal gain / profit**. They are insubordinate and deceivers (Titus 1:10-11, they also teach myths 1:14).
3. Some are teaching **asceticism**, forbidding certain meats, and to marry (1 Tim 4:3).
4. Some **deny a future physical resurrection**, saying the resurrection (spiritual) has already taken place (2 Tim 2:18).
5. Some cause disturbance by being enamoured with **endless and aimless disputes** about inconsequential matters. (2 Tim 2:14; 3:9)

Conclusion

Through the Pastoral Epistles, Paul provides wisdom for life inside the local church and particular instruction for those who are called to lead and govern the church.

Memory Verse**1 Timothy 3: 14-15 (NIV)**

“Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth”.

New Testament Survey

Unit 317 – Foundations 3

Week 3 – Session 2
Pauline Epistles (Prison)



Introduction

Paul indicates that he wrote four very similar epistles while “in bonds” (a fifth, 2 Timothy was also written from prison). These are Ephesians (3:1; 4:1), Colossians (4:18), Philemon (1, 9) and Philippians (1:7, 13, 14).

A. The Epistle to the Ephesians

This letter appears to have been written at much the same time as Colossians and deals with similar themes and ideas, although from an ecclesiastical (church) perspective rather than a cosmic (universal) perspective. It was written from prison, and is thus classified with the prison epistles. The city of Ephesus and surrounding region were first evangelised when Paul spent 2 years in Ephesus itself. The events that took place there are recorded in Acts 19. Paul paid the city a final visit before his trip to Jerusalem, at which place he was arrested and eventually sent to Rome.

Outline of contents:

- Chap 1: Greetings
 Thanksgiving for spiritual blessings in Christ
 A prayer for spiritual understanding of believers
- Chap 2: The former status of believers – dead in sin
 The current status of believers – alive in Christ by faith and grace
 Their position in the household of God, shared equally by Jews and Gentiles
- Chap 3: Jew and Gentile together, as believers, constitute the body of Christ
 A prayer for the need of experiencing and showing the love of Christ
- Chap 4: Christian life realised in experience and practice:
 - in the unity of the Spirit
 - in enjoying his gifts to the church
 - in separation from the old life, living the new
- Chap 5: - in love, purity and wisdom, in joyful thanksgiving
 - in submission to one another: marriage
- Chap 6: - in submission to one another: children and parents
 - in submission to one another: masters and slaves
- Spiritual warfare, and the whole armour of God
 Conclusion, prayer, benediction

Characteristics:

1. Central is the **idea of unity**, particularly between Jew and Gentile, in the body of Christ.

2. There is a strong emphasis upon **unity in all matters of faith**.
3. **God's purpose and will** are emphasised.
4. The phrase '**in Christ**' or its equivalent appears more often than in any other epistle.
5. **Two prayers** are included at crucial points of the doctrinal argument.
6. Typical **terminology** includes grace, love, holy, mystery, and 'the heavenlies'.
7. There is a **sharp division between the doctrinal and practical** portions of the letter at 4:1.
8. There is a **long section on domestic relations**.
9. Special attention is given to the **conflict of believers with hostile spirit powers**.

B. The Epistle to the Philippians

The city of Philippi was Paul's first serious stop on his second missionary journey into Europe. Luke tells us in Acts 16 that it was the leading city of Macedonia (although Thessalonica was the capital), and that it was a Roman colony. It was situated on the main route through Macedonia leading to Illyricum on the Adriatic, and thus was a city of some commercial importance.

Most converts in Philippi were probably Gentile, and despite the unpleasant experience of Paul and Silas there, their troubles (for a change) were not initiated by Jews.

It would appear that Luke may have remained behind to pastor the church there, since his record after Philippi no longer contains 'we' sections. He would doubtless have kept Paul up to date with the situation there. The church seemed to have a special relationship with Paul - certainly no other group is treated as warmly as the Philippians, neither do we know of any other which sent him gifts. It was also at Philippi that women stood out in the service of the Lord (eg. Lydia, and his ref. in Phil 4:3), something more likely in a Roman colony than in a Greek city. Women are also known to be more mindful of those little attentions, such as the occasional gift, which would have made Paul's life of sacrifice so much easier to bear.

From 2:25-30 we learn that Epaphroditus had been sent by the church at Philippi with gifts for Paul. He had taken sick, had almost died. Now he had recovered and was ready to return to Philippi. Paul makes use of his services to carry his affection and thanks to the church.

Outline of Contents:

- Chap 1: Greetings, and Paul's love for the Philippians
A prayer for their fruitfulness in Christ
Personal matters - Paul's comfort despite imprisonment and the activities of those hostile to him
Encouraging the Philippians to persevere as he does
- Chap 2: Be humble and avoid disputes - have the mind of Christ
The Christ Hymn (2:5-11)
Paul will soon send Timothy
Epaphroditus' sickness and recovery
- Chap 3: Paul's example to be followed - nothing can compare to Christ
Press on toward the mark
Polemic against sensualists and materialists
- Chap 4: Encouragement to continue in godliness
Thanks for the gift they sent him. Salutations and benediction.

Characteristics:

1. The epistle is notably **warm, personal and friendly**. Paul uses the word "I" 52 times, more than in any other letter.
2. "For me to live is Christ" - despite the "I" emphases, **Christ is central** to the epistle, and to Paul; the "I" is subordinated to Christ in every way.
3. **There is little doctrine** in the letter, and what there is given in direct relationship to practical needs E.G. the self-emptying of Christ as an example of humility and mutual concern.
4. **Women receive prominence** in this letter. This is in line with their emancipated condition in Macedonia.
6. The **inclusion of the *episkopoi* and *diakono*** in the address is unusual. This may be because Paul is thanking the whole church, as represented by its leaders, for the gift sent to him.
7. The thinking behind 4:8, 11-12 (thinking on the good, being content, being 'instructed' in the secret of living) appears to owe something to the **common Stoic philosophy** of the day, which would no doubt have been represented in Philippi. If so, it shows that not only was Paul not ashamed to acknowledge the good in human ethical efforts, but also that he is recognising a fair level of erudition among the believers in Philippi - the opposite to the Corinthian situation.

C. The Epistle to the Colossians

Some scholars question the Pauline authorship of Colossians due to internal stylistic differences from other Pauline writings and have suggested it may have

been written by a colleague close to Paul but the similarity in Paul's interests among the epistles leads us to believe that they were written all written by Paul and penned during the same period of captivity. Three are closely linked by internal evidence: Tychicus was the bearer of Colossians (4:7) and of Ephesians (6:21), and had as a companion Onesimus (Col 4:9), who was the bearer of the epistle concerning his own personal experiences with Paul to Philemon.

Place of writing, and date:

Many people believe these letters were written from Rome, where Paul had arrived as a captive at the end of the book of Acts. Others believe it may have been from Caesarea, where he was held for two years before being sent to Rome to appeal to Caesar. If the epistles were written from Caesarea, they can be dated just prior to, or about 60 AD. If from Rome, then they would be dated two years later, in the early sixties.

Background:

The city of Colossae was situated in the Lycus valley, about 160 km east of Ephesus. Paul probably travelled through there, but it appears he neither preached there, nor founded the work. This was done by Epaphras (Col 1:4; 2:1; 1:7; 4:12-13). It was not a very large place, overshadowed by the larger towns of Hierapolis and Laodicea. It was in the province of Asia, and thus was probably evangelised when Paul was in Ephesus (Acts 19:10) and Epaphras heard the gospel from him there. It would seem that the majority of believers there were Gentiles (1:27; 2:13). Although the church was in a generally satisfactory condition, there appeared to be a constant stream of false teaching threatening. Epaphras had probably told Paul of this, and asked his advice. Although Paul is not personally linked to the church, he writes to commend them for their faith and to warn them of the dangers of the heresy. There is disagreement among biblical scholars as to what the 'Colossian Heresy' actually was but we do know that:

- It deceived the church with strange arguments
- Paul considered it a hollow and deceptive philosophy
- It depended on human traditions and elemental spiritual forces of this world

It seems to have been a syncretistic concoction of Jewish 'sounding' teaching mixed with the pagan Hellenistic view of special religious festivals, activities, food rules and worship of angels. The main point though was that the supremacy of Christ was being undermined.

Outline of contents:

1:1-2	Greetings
1:3-8	Thanks for the believers in Colossae
1:9-14	A prayer for their growth in faith
1:15-23	The pre-eminence and glory of Christ

1:24-29	Paul's mission and motivation
2:1-5	His loving concern for the Colossians
2:6-23	The best defence against error is to walk in the complete sufficiency of Jesus Christ
3:1-17	Putting on the new life in Christ Jesus - what it means in practical terms
3:18-4:1	Domestic relationships from the Christian perspective
4:2-6	Final exhortation to prayer, godly conduct and gracious speech
4:7-17	Personal affairs of Paul
4:18	Close and benediction

The nature of the false teaching:

Paul does not spell out what this is precisely, but his warnings imply a number of things:

1. He warns against being taken in by a **philosophy which is empty deceit** (2:8). The terminology would seem to imply some sort of gnosticism, a fusion of religion and philosophy which maintained that men could be initiated into a higher form of life and knowledge. They could then escape the toils of evil matter and enter the light of pure spirit. It implied an absolute dualism between matter (which was evil) and spirit (which was good).
2. He warns against **worship of angels** (2:18), amongst which spirit beings may be included the 'elements' of 2:8, perhaps of 2:20. Angels were considered to be intermediate beings who could guide humans along the pathway to the esoteric knowledge leading to enlightenment.
3. The **external piety of Judaism** also seems to have been advocated by the heretics (2:16). These included dietary laws, festivals, new moons, and sabbaths.
4. **Asceticism** appears to be part of the false teaching, demanding abstinence from certain things, and imposing restrictions on the body (2:21-23). This was an important part of gnostic thought, where such abstinence is meritorious. Although Christians should be prepared to keep the body and its appetites under control, it is not essentially ascetic in this sense; rather, it is so that the believer might not be distracted from his mission and discipleship.

Paul confronts it primarily by a Christological argument. Christ has created all things, holds them all together, and reconciled all things by his death (1:15-20). By that death he defeated all principalities and powers (2:15). The false teaching failed to hold to Christ as the Head (2:19). He is pre-eminent (1:18), if believers have Him, they have fullness (2:10). There is no need for some special enlightenment outside of Him, in him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (2:3).

Believers do not need to impose severe discipline upon their bodies in order to earn some form of merit - but they do need to put to death their own sinful desires, so as to better represent the glorified Christ. Central to Paul's argument is the headship of Christ. In Ephesians this is expressed primarily in terms of the church; in Colossians in terms of the cosmos, which includes the church and the individual. This epistle is central to the contemporary church's response to the waves of occultism, Eastern mysticism and Christian gnosticism sweeping the world today - the so-called 'New Age' teachings.

B. The Letter to Philemon

Background:

Onesimus was a slave who belonged to Philemon, a friend of Paul's, and a member of the church at Colossae. He had apparently run away, after wronging his master. He found himself in the same city as Paul, and, having heard of him in his master's house, now looked him up. We do not know what his motive was, whether to ask for money, or relief from a guilty conscience, or mere loneliness. The life of an escaped slave was desperate and lonely. Paul led him to salvation through Jesus Christ, and now the thorny question had to be answered: what to do with Onesimus?

According to Roman law, which Christians honoured despite its inequities (eg. Jesus and the question of tax to Caesar), Onesimus was the legal property of Philemon. He therefore had to return to his master. The epistle aims at smoothing the way for this return, with Paul asking his friend to receive and forgive the slave. He was to do this now not only as a slave, but as a brother. Paul appears to hint at the possibility of manumission for Onesimus, although this would not have been feasible unless Onesimus was skilled in some marketable way - not something that could be said of many slaves in those days. Although this is the most personal letter in the New Testament, with 2 Timothy coming close, it includes in the address the apparent family (Apphia -wife? and Archippus - son?) of Philemon, as well as the church in his house. This would make it difficult for Philemon to deny Paul's request, and the fact that the letter was preserved intimates he reacted favourably.

Outline of contents:

- Greeting (1-3)
- Commendation of Philemon (4-7)
- Intercession for Onesimus (8-22)
- Salutations and Benediction (23-25)

The Value of Philemon:

This letter gives a glimpse of two things:

1. The attitude of the early Christian community to the institution of slavery. Implicit in Christianity is the denial of the right of a man to own his fellow - but more than half the population of the empire were slaves... The church did not call for rebellion or action outside of the law, but rather (as in the orders set in Colossians and Ephesians) called for Christian conduct from both masters and servants. Emancipation was not always a realistic possibility, since an emancipated slave without a trade became a burden upon society and the church. The attitude of the early church was more realistic than that of the American abolitionist, whose Civil War freed thousands of slaves without making any provision for their maintenance, thus leaving the Black population of the American south economically devastated for a further century;
2. The nature of Paul the man. He writes to Philemon as neither apostle, theologian nor church planter - he writes as a Christian man, and as a friend. He shows the gospel has worked in his heart too - he can befriend and plead for a truant slave.

Conclusion

The Prison Epistles of Paul provide us with a profound insight into the apostle's Christology and Ecclesiology and allow us to see the fruit of faithfulness to Jesus while experiencing the personal sacrifice that comes with following Him.

Memory Verse**Ephesians 3:10-11 (NIV)**

“His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord”.