

Week 6:

**Paul's Later Letters (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians,
Philemon, 1-2 Timothy and Titus)**

A Chronology of Paul:

-In AD 55, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem after returning from his third missionary journey. He remained in prison in Caesarea until around AD 58.

-Between AD 58-60 Paul was in prison in Rome. *While in prison he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.*

-Sometime between AD 60 and 66 Paul was released from prison and resumed his travels in preparation to take the gospel to Spain. *It is during this time that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus.*

-Around AD 66 Paul was rearrested and was executed by AD 67. *During this short second imprisonment, Paul wrote 2 Timothy.*

The Message of Philippians:

Introduction to Ephesians:

Authorship: The author of Ephesians is Paul the Apostle. His name appears in the "from line" in the letter itself, and the text reflects Pauline concerns and theology. There are modern scholars who argue that Ephesians is a forgery, but there is ample evidence of Pauline authorship. Ephesians is different from the earlier letters. Paul's theology is more comprehensively formulated in the prison epistles, and his writing shows signs of maturity. His writing in the prison epistles also reflects a much more established church situation.

Date: Ephesians, along with Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, was written while Paul was in prison, either in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome. These prison epistles clearly demonstrate Paul's captivity, but they are optimistic. Paul was expecting to be released in the near future. Thus near the end of the first Roman imprisonment (AD60) is probably the best suggestion for the timing of their writing.

Provenance: If the conclusions above about the date are correct, then Paul most likely wrote Ephesians while he was under house arrest in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome.

Purpose: Ephesians is an important statement of the gospel, but its theme and purpose are not readily evident. Some scholars have suggested that perhaps Ephesians was designed to circulate among many churches, and that's why it doesn't appear to them to address any particular problems.

Outline of Ephesians:

Ephesians, like so many of Paul's other letters, follows a two-part pattern. Paul often writes his letters in two general parts. The first part is nearly always doctrinal. Paul begins his letters with theological argumentation and teaches us about God and his gospel, often for the majority of the letter. The second part is nearly always practical. Doctrine matters, and Paul wants to be sure we don't miss that what we believe determines how we live. The pattern in Ephesians looks like this:

- I. The Doctrinal Portion of Ephesians - Chapters 1-3
- II. The Practical Portion of Ephesians - Chapter 4-6

In Ephesians 4:1 Paul transitions from the doctrinal to the practical: "I therefore a prisoner for the Lord urge you to walk worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . ." Ephesians 1-3 describes our "calling" in the gospel. Ephesians 4-6 describes what it means to walk worthy of the gospel.

Ephesians Chapter by Chapter:

- Eph 1 - "The election chapter." Paul's prayer for the Ephesians.
- Eph 2 - Justification by faith.
- Eph 3 - The "mystery of Christ" chapter.
- Eph 4 - Walk worthy of your calling. Spiritual Gifts
- Eph 5 - Be imitators of God. Marriage "in Christ."
- Eph 6 - Other family relationships. The "armor of God."

The Meaning of Ephesians:

Ephesians is one of the loftiest statements of the gospel in all of the New Testament. Paul talks about all the benefits of our salvation—peace with God, heaven, an inheritance, Christ-likeness—as all belonging to us right now. Paul isn't suggesting that we aren't still waiting on our salvation, but he wants the Ephesians (and us) to realize the great treasure that we have right now in Christ, so that we might be encouraged, empowered, and live lives worthy of the gospel.

Introduction to Philippians:

Authorship: The author of Philippians is Paul the Apostle. His name appears in the "from line" in the letter itself, and the text reflects Pauline concerns and theology. Pauline authorship of Philippians is undisputed. Paul's theology is, however, more comprehensively formulated in the prison epistles, and his writing shows signs of maturity. His writing in the prison epistles also reflects a much more established church situation.

Date: Philippians, along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, was written while Paul was in prison, either in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome. These prison epistles clearly demonstrate Paul's captivity, but they are optimistic. Paul was expecting to be released in the near future. Thus near the end of the first Roman imprisonment (AD60) is probably the best suggestion for the timing of their writing.

Provenance: If the conclusions above about the date are correct, then Paul most likely wrote Philippians while he was under house arrest in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome.

Purpose: Paul's letter to the Philippians has several pastoral concerns: a call to unity, a concern for false teachers, and a thank you for the gift the Philippians gave to help the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul's letter also has more than a few personal concerns. First, Paul wants to update the Philippians on his circumstances and on the health of Epaphroditus. Paul wants the Philippians to be encouraged by his current circumstances even though he is in prison and Paul wants the Philippians to be encouraged by the fact that Epaphroditus' health has improved. Second, Paul wants to commend Timothy to them, so they will receive Timothy when he comes to prepare them for Paul's visit.

Outline and Philippians Chapter by Chapter:

Paul comes back to the theme of unity throughout the letter. The letter is a call for unity. Paul is concerned about the doctrinal unity of the church in light of false teachers. Paul celebrates the unity of the church in taking up the collection, in receiving both him and Epaphroditus, and in their ongoing passion for the mission of Jesus. Thus, the outline looks like this:

Phil 1 - Paul gives thanks for the Philippians and describes his present circumstances.

Phil 2 - Paul gives three examples of unity: Jesus, Timothy, and Epaphroditus.

Phil 3 - Paul warns them about false teachers and other dangers to unity.

Phil 4 - Paul makes a final appeal to unity and tells the Philippians of his plans.

The Meaning of Philippians:

Just as in Ephesians, Paul comes back to this idea of living in a manner worthy of the gospel (Phil 1:27). The body of Christ is to be unified in how we live life together. We are to get along. But Christian unity is so much more than that. The body of Christ is to be unified in how we give, in how we serve, in how we witness, in how we do mission, and in how we suffer. That is what it means to walk worthy of the gospel of Jesus.

Introduction to Colossians:

Authorship: The author of Colossians is Paul the Apostle. His name appears in the "from line" in the letter itself, and the text reflects Pauline concerns and theology. There are modern scholars who argue that Colossians is a forgery, but there is ample evidence of Pauline authorship. Colossians, like Ephesians and the other prison epistles, is different from Paul's earlier letters. Paul's theology is more comprehensively formulated in the prison epistles, and his writing shows signs of maturity. His writing in the prison epistles also reflects a much more established church situation.

Date: Colossians, along with Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon, was written while Paul was in prison, either in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome. These prison epistles clearly demonstrate Paul's captivity, but they are optimistic. Paul was expecting to be released in the near future. Thus near the end of the first Roman imprisonment (AD60) is probably the best suggestion for the timing of their writing.

Provenance: If the conclusions above about the date are correct, then Paul most likely wrote Colossians while he was under house arrest in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome.

Purpose: Paul had tremendous concern for the Colossians. A church had been planted there by lay-missionaries, led by Epaphras, from Ephesus. Paul had heard great things about the church, but because he had never been there to teach them himself, he was worried about them. Paul knew that there were many cultural voices in Colossae that were contrary to the gospel—Greek philosophy, gnosticism, Jewish mysticism, mystery cults, asceticism, etc. And Paul wanted to be sure the Colossians were grounded in their faith, so they could properly filter out those voices and live a life worthy of the gospel. In other words, because Paul couldn't be there to teach them, he wanted them to be self-theologizing.

Outline and Chapter by Chapter of Colossians:

Paul focuses in Colossians on teaching. He couldn't be with them in Colossae to respond to every question, every problem, every challenge. The churches there would need to learn to do that for themselves. In Colossians, Paul teaches them very deep theological truths about Christ, and then shows them how to apply those truths to the questions of their day. Colossians, also, roughly follows Paul's normal pattern of presenting doctrine first and then dealing with practical issues.

Col 1 - Introduction and Paul's history with the Colossians followed by an extended discourse on the supremacy of Christ

Col 2 - Paul deals with several example issues facing the Colossians: Greek philosophy, Jewish practices, mysticism, asceticism, etc.

Col 3 - Christian living in light of the gospel

Col 4 - Conclusion and final greeting

The Meaning of Colossians:

It is easy to see Colossians as one of the least immediately useful books in all of the New Testament. Paul's arguments are focused on issues that we do not face. Most Christians are not faced with Jewish mysticism or first-century ascetic practices. Greek philosophy, for the most part, isn't on our radar screen. But the truth is, Colossians is perhaps the most immediately useful book in all of Paul's letters. First, we don't have to dig very deep to discover just how relevant Colossians 2 is. We don't face first-century asceticism, but asceticism is still alive and well in our culture and in the church. We don't face Jewish mysticism, but our culture, even our Christian culture, is very mystical in its thinking and practice. Greek philosophy isn't screaming for our attention these days, but our culture has an equally wrong and equally persuasive philosophy of the live and the world that constantly tries to command our ascent and drive out the gospel. And second, Colossians isn't just about the problems for the Colossians. It stands as a model for how the church, ours and theirs, should be self-theologizing. We should be ever rooted and growing in the gospel and in the knowledge of Christ and applying that knowledge to our cultures and our challenges with wisdom and precision. Put simply, Colossians isn't a telemarketer script: when the Jews say, "_____" you say, "_____." Colossians is a theology text that calls us to know Christ better and to think Christianly better in the face of our hostile culture.

Introduction to Philemon:

Authorship: The author of Philemon is Paul the Apostle. His name appears in the "from line" in the letter itself, and the text is clearly connected to Colossians.

Date: Philemon, along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians was written while Paul was in prison, either in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome. Thus near the end of the first Roman imprisonment (AD60) is probably the best suggestion for the timing of their writing. The personal details between Colossians and Philemon may suggest that Philemon was written before Colossians.

Provenance: If the conclusions above about the date are correct, then Paul most likely wrote Philemon while he was under house arrest in Caesarea or, more likely, Rome, some months before he wrote Colossians.

Purpose: Philemon was the Colossian owner of the runaway slave named Onesimus. Onesimus apparently robbed Philemon and then ran away. Divine providence (with perhaps some scheming on Onesimus' part) brought Onesimus to Paul while Paul was still under house arrest. Paul led Onesimus to Christ, and Onesimus became a lay minister of the gospel and helper of Paul. When Paul found out about Onesimus' past, under Roman law, Paul had two options for how to deal with a known runaway slave: 1) sell the slave and send the money to Philemon as compensation or 2) send the slave back. Paul opted for the latter, and sent Onesimus back to Philemon with this letter. In the letter Paul never mentions manumission of Onesimus. He does, however, demand his treatment as a brother. Philemon is to receive Onesimus as he would receive Paul. The implication is that Philemon was to free Onesimus.

Content of Philemon:

Philemon is a short personal letter between two friends about a friend who was in trouble. Slavery was the issue, and the gospel is the solution.

vs 1-3	Introduction from Paul to Philemon
vs 4-7	Thanksgiving for Philemon's faithfulness
vs 8-16	Paul appeals to the gospel to change Philemon's thinking about slavery.
vs 17-22	Paul's request for the release of Onesimus to the ministry in Rome
vs 23-25	Conclusion and final greeting

The Meaning of Philemon:

Many readers of Philemon are concerned that Paul doesn't condemn slavery as openly as he should, but Paul puts the institution of slavery on such grounds that it was doomed in Christian the understanding. The only time that Paul directly addresses the issue of an individual slave, he all but demands his freedom. The gospel puts the slave and master on equal footing before the Lord. The gospel puts the Christian slave and his Christian master in the same family. Both owner and slave are answerable to the same Lord for their actions. The gospel changes everything, and everywhere Christian civilization has gone wrong (the crusades, slavery, etc.), it is because we have rejected the gospel.

Introduction to 1-2 Timothy and Titus:

Authorship: 1-2 Timothy and Titus, commonly called the Pastoral Epistles because of their content and recipients, were written by the Apostle Paul. Many modern scholars challenge the traditional view of Pauline authorship, but there is plenty of evidence that these letters were genuinely written by Paul. Most of the differences skeptics find between the Pastoral Epistles and Paul's other letters are best explained by: 1) the recipients (church-planting pastors instead of laymen in churches), 2) the timing (Paul wrote these letters at the end of his life, almost 20 years after he wrote Galatians), and 3) the circumstances (Paul is writing to encourage ministers not to deal with problems in the church).

Date: 1 Timothy and Titus were written during Paul's later travels, somewhere between AD60 and AD66, after Paul's first Roman imprisonment. According to tradition and a careful reading of the Pastorals, Paul was released from prison in Rome and began preparing for the fourth missionary journey to Spain. During these "later travels," Paul worked to establish Timothy in Ephesus and Titus in Crete to establish the churches there and to continue the missionary enterprise. Paul was then rearrested and imprisoned a second time in Rome for preaching the gospel. 2 Timothy was most likely written from prison just before his execution around AD66.

Provenance: If the conclusions above about the dates are correct, then Paul most likely wrote 1 Timothy and Titus during his travels between Roman imprisonments and 2 Timothy while he was in prison in Rome awaiting execution.

Purpose: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus are the final written words of Paul to his closest friends and ministers. Paul is situating Timothy and Titus as leaders in the ongoing mission to take the gospel to the ends of the earth, and Paul is preparing the church for his impending absence. Doctrinal concerns and false teachers are always at the forefront of Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus as well as are concerns for ministry in a local church.

Chapter by Chapter for 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus:

1 Timothy - Paul's occasion for writing 1 Timothy is to urge Timothy to lead the churches in Ephesus and to doctrinally protect them from false teaching (1 Tim 1:3-4). The content of 1 Timothy is as follows:

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| 1 Tim 1 | Warning concerning false teachers |
| 1 Tim 2 | Instruct the churches to pray. |
| 1 Tim 3 | Qualifications for pastors and deacons |
| 1 Tim 4 | Responsibilities of a minister in light of the fact that false teachers will only grow worse and worse |
| 1 Tim 5 | Instructions for the church regarding various groups |
| 1 Tim 6 | Paul's final encouragement to Timothy |

Titus - Paul's occasion for writing Titus is to urge Titus to plant and establish churches all over Crete (Titus 1:5). The content of Titus is as follows:

- Titus 1 Instructions regarding qualifications for elders
- Titus 2 Instructions concerning relationships in the church
- Titus 3 Instructions regarding Christian living in light of false teaching

2 Timothy - Paul is at the end of his life. He knows his death is just around the corner, so Paul writes a final encouragement and charge to his friend Timothy. The content of 2 Timothy is as follows:

- 2 Tim 1 Call to faithfulness
- 2 Tim 2 Difficulties on the path of faithfulness
- 2 Tim 3 The coming faithlessness
- 2 Tim 4 Final challenge and conclusion

The Meaning of the Pastorals:

The Pastorals have a lot to say about church life, about church planting, and about false teachers. But most importantly, the Pastoral epistles represent the final legacy of a person who lived his life worthy of the gospel.