

Paul's Epistles (Part II)



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Introduction

The Pauline Epistles



I. Colossians

WHO WHERE	
WRITER	Paul
AUDIENCE	The church in Colossae
TIME PERIOD	Under house arrest in Rome, Paul wrote his letter to the Colossians around AD 60.
RELATIONSHIP	Epaphras planted the church in Colossae. Paul and the Colossians didn't know each other personally, but respected one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Heretical teachers in Colossae were presenting false teachings about Jesus and religious practices.

Introduction

In lesson seven, we surveyed six of Paul's thirteen letters, and in this lesson we look at the other seven.

I. Colossians

We begin Lesson 8 with Paul's epistle to the church at Colossae. When we talked about Romans, we said it was one of two letters Paul wrote to churches he didn't plant. Colossians is the other one. The Colossian church had been planted by one of Paul's coworkers named Epaphras, who received high praise from Paul in Colossians 1:7-8. He had recently visited Paul in Rome with disturbing news about the Colossian church. Because Paul was under house arrest in Rome and couldn't go there, he wrote this letter to them. The letter was written around AD 60. Paul's greeting to "the saints and faithful brethren in Colossae" (1:2) sets a tone for the letter. Paul didn't know most of these believers, but as his brothers and sisters Christ Paul assured them: "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (1:3 NASB). Like the Romans, these Colossians Christians would receive Paul's letter with gratitude, knowing it was from a stranger they highly respected and who cared deeply about their welfare.

The issues in Colossae were not behavioral ones such as the Corinthian church was dealing with. Apparently some heretical teachers were presenting them with false teachings about Jesus and about religious practices and festivals. The believers were being taught falsehoods regarding angel worship and secret knowledge attained through human reasoning and philosophy. But the most dangerous teaching was distorted ideas about Christ's nature. Throughout the book, Paul presents strong teaching about Jesus and especially about His deity.

I. Colossians

WHAT WHY	
PURPOSE To reassure readers that Jesus's claim to save us from sin and give us abundant life is legitimate	KEY STATEMENT or VERSE Colossians 2:9-10 <i>For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.</i>
BIG IDEA or THEME Jesus Christ is the Son of God.	

The purpose of this letter was to reassure readers that Jesus's claim to save us from sin and give us the abundant life is legitimate. To assure his readers that Jesus's offer is valid, Paul briefly refuted the various false teachings. But his major emphasis was to present an accurate teaching about Jesus Christ as the Son of God. An example of Paul's teaching about Jesus is recorded in Colossians 2:9–10 (NIV), "For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority."

I. Colossians

HOW	
ORGANIZATION 1. Chapters 1–2 Paul lays a doctrinal base about Jesus's sovereignty. 2. Chapters 3–4 Paul urges readers to submit to Christ's authority.	
CONTRIBUTION Colossians contributes greatly to the doctrine of Christology.	APPLICATION Colossians is used for theological teaching and to remind us of whom it is that we worship, serve, and trust.

Like many of Paul's letters, Colossians can be outlined in two movements. First he laid down a solid doctrinal base about Jesus's sovereignty in chapters 1 and 2. He teaches us to recognize and acknowledge Jesus's supremacy as God's Son. Then in chapters 3 and 4 he urges us to submit to Christ's authority. Since Jesus is who He claims to be, it would be absurd to follow any other teacher. Paul introduced the second movement in his book this way: "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things" (3:1–2 NIV).

The book of Colossians contributes greatly to the doctrine of Christology, and we use it today both for theological teaching and to remind us who we worship, serve, and trust for our eternal salvation.

II. 1 Thessalonians

WHO WHERE	
WRITER Paul	
AUDIENCE The church in Thessalonica	

II. 1 Thessalonians

The next book in the New Testament is 1 Thessalonians. Paul planted the Thessalonian church on his second missionary journey right after he fled the city of Philippi. Because of persecution in Thessalonica shortly after he arrived. He was only there a brief time. After he left Thessalonica he stopped briefly in Berea and Athens. He was in Corinth when he heard from Timothy about the struggles the Thessalonian believers were having. He immediately wrote this letter; and his purpose was to encourage and instruct them about how to live well under difficult circumstances. They were suffering severe persecution and were being confused by false teaching about Jesus's return. The letter was written around AD 50.

Like the Philippian believers, Paul and the Thessalonian Christians

II. 1 Thessalonians

WHAT WHY	
PURPOSE To encourage and instruct the Thessalonians about how to live well under difficult circumstances	KEY STATEMENT or VERSE 1 Thessalonians 4:1 <i>As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more.</i>
BIG IDEA or THEME The only antidote to falling backwards is aggressively moving forwards.	

had a spiritually intimate relationship. In the short time they had been Christians, the Thessalonians had shown that their faith was deep and their love for Christ was passionate. But Paul expressed his desire that they continue to grow: “As for other matters, brothers and sisters, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1 NIV). Paul urged the Christians to aggressively pursue growth in their Christian life. The big idea in this book is that the only antidote to falling backwards is to aggressively move forward.

II. 1 Thessalonians

HOW	
ORGANIZATION 1. Chapters 1–3 Paul reflects on his relationship with the Thessalonians, commends them for their growth, and encourages them to remain faithful. 2. Chapters 4–5 Paul provides instructions in holiness as a foundation for future growth.	
CONTRIBUTION 1 Thessalonians contains important teaching about Jesus's resurrection and second coming.	APPLICATION In describing himself as a nursing mother and nurturing father, Paul provides a model for pastors today.

In chapters 1–3 Paul reflected on the warm relationship he and the Thessalonians had enjoyed. He commended them for their growth and encouraged them to remain faithful to Christ. Then in chapters 4–5 he provided instructions in holiness as a foundation for their future growth. Sprinkled throughout the letter are references to Jesus's return. First Thessalonians contains important teaching about Jesus's resurrection and second coming. And when Paul described himself as a nursing mother and a nurturing father in chapter 2, he provided a terrific model for pastors today.

III. 2 Thessalonians

WHO WHERE	
WRITER Paul	
AUDIENCE The church in Thessalonica	
TIME PERIOD Written about six months after 1 Thessalonians	

III. 2 Thessalonians

About six months after writing the first letter to the Thessalonians, Paul wrote another one. Knowing that they were still being persecuted for their faith, he wrote this letter to encourage them in their struggles and to teach them about the Day of the Lord. We could refer to 1 and 2 Thessalonians as Paul's eschatology, or doctrine of last things, because in these letters, more than in any other, he teaches about Jesus's return. Paul's purpose was to encourage his readers to live triumphantly in their difficult circumstances. His big idea is that God's faithfulness in the past should encourage us about His faithfulness in the future.

In chapter 1 he complimented them for how well they were dealing with opposition. “We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing” (2 Thessalonians 1:3 NIV). In chapter 2 he added to the instructions he had given them in 1 Thessalonians about Jesus's return. He then focused his attention in chapter 3 on encouraging them to live the Christian life as he had instructed. So Paul turned the Thessalonians' suffering into an impetus for growth and complimented them that in the midst of their hard

IV. 1 Timothy



Pastoral Epistles

times they were glorifying God and loving each other.

Second Thessalonians, like Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, contains essential information about the Day of the Lord when Christ returns. It encourages Christians in any age to never lose sight of our eternal hope.

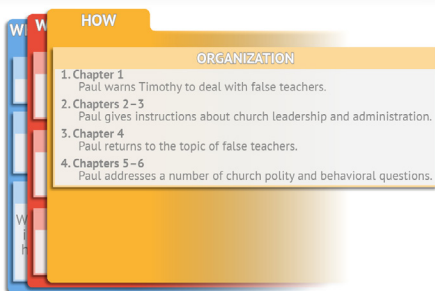
IV. 1 Timothy

The next three letters are known as the Pastoral Epistles because they were written to encourage and instruct the pastors Timothy and Titus. Paul had been released from prison in AD 62 and went on a fourth missionary journey. He was in Macedonia when he wrote his first letter to Timothy in AD 64 and urged him to remain at Ephesus as pastor of the church there. His big idea is that godly leaders must live godly lives. He told Timothy, "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" (1 Timothy 3:14–15). The letter is a mixture of instructions about church and personal matters. His purpose was to encourage and instruct Timothy in his ministry. Two issues Paul gave special attention to were false teachers and leadership questions.

This letter doesn't lend itself easily to an outline because Paul moves from topic to topic and then returns to issues he previously addressed. He also mixed his discussion of personal and vocational aspects of pastoral ministry throughout the book. He began by warning Timothy to deal with false teachers in chapter 1. Chapters 2 and 3 contain instructions about church leadership and administration. Then in chapter 4 Paul returned to the topic of how to deal with false teachers. In chapters 5 and 6 he addressed a number of church polity and behavioral questions.

Paul's two letters to Timothy are his most personal letters. He addressed Timothy as "my true child in the faith" (1 Timothy 1:2). He had led Timothy to Christ and on his second missionary journey invited Timothy to join the church-planting team. That began a personal and co-ministry relationship that lasted for the rest of Paul's life. Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted associates, as well as a beloved friend. He is named as co-sender of six of Paul's epistles. First Timothy gives us valuable insight into church ministry and leadership and is still used today as a resource for ministers.

IV. 1 Timothy



V. 2 Timothy

WHO WHERE	
WRITER Paul	RELATIONSHIP Timothy was Paul's "beloved son in the faith."
AUDIENCE Timothy	
TIME PERIOD Written in AD 66/67 from Paul's prison cell	

V. 2 Timothy

Second Timothy was written a few years after 1 Timothy in 66/67. Paul was back in prison and knew that his time was limited. Second Timothy was Paul's final charge to his beloved "son in the faith." The letter had two main purposes. First, Paul asked Timothy to join him in Rome. As the time for his departure drew near, he wanted to see his young disciple again. Second, he encouraged Timothy to be strong in his ministry. In 2 Timothy 1:7 he told him, "God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but [a spirit] of power and love and discipline" (NASB). And he encouraged Timothy to "not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God" (v. 8). In 2:1 he wrote, "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (NASB). In 2:15 he wrote, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." In his first letter he told Timothy to "let no one look down on your youth" (1 Timothy 4:12). With increased opposition to the church and the presence of heretical teachers, Paul was concerned about his young disciple's courage and welfare.

V. 2 Timothy

WHAT WHY	
PURPOSE To ask Timothy to join Paul in Rome To encourage Timothy to be strong in his ministry	
KEY STATEMENTS or VERSES 2 Timothy 1:7-8 2 Timothy 2:1 2 Timothy 2:15 Timothy 3:16-17 2 Timothy 4:1-2	<p>All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.</p> <p>I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus . . . : preach the Word!</p>

Paul reminded Timothy that his authority and confidence rested in his faithfulness to God's Word. The key to courage in ministry is believing "all Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17 NASB). That's why Paul wrote, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus . . . : preach the Word" (4:1–2)!

Paul's big idea in 2 Timothy is that we must be strong and faithful in the ministry God has given us. Paul's personal example of strength and faithfulness encouraged Timothy and millions of readers through the centuries to finish strong.

The letter began with personal matters as Paul expressed his concerns for Timothy's welfare. In chapter 2 he instructed Timothy about his personal behavior as a ministry leader. He warned Timothy that difficult times would come in the last days and urged him to stay strong and faithful to God's Word. He closed the letter in chapters 3–4 with his final charges to Timothy.

Second Timothy is a timely word for those who minister to people. Paul reminds us that our authority does not rest in our own wisdom. We can speak most boldly and confidently when we base our counsel on God's inspired Word.

VI. Titus

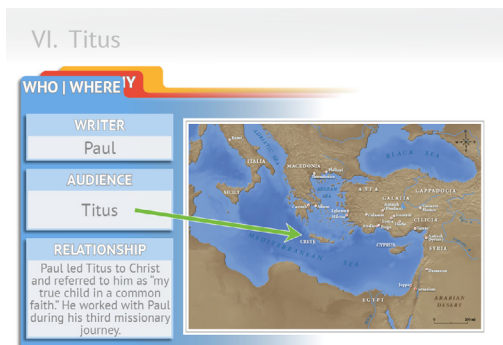
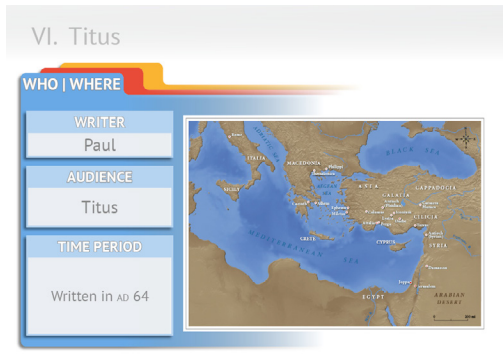
The third pastoral epistle was written to another of Paul's disciples named Titus in AD 64. Paul wrote to instruct him about ministering to an especially difficult church situation. Since Paul referred to his ministry in various cities on the island of Crete, it appears he had oversight of a number of churches there. Paul and Titus had planted these churches sometime after Paul's release from prison, and Paul had left Titus there to "set in order what remains and to appoint elders in every city" (Titus 1:5 NASB).

The big idea of this letter to Titus is to be faithful to God and His Word in conducting a godly ministry. Paul's purpose was to instruct and support Titus's work. The book opens with instruction to Titus about appointing church elders (1:5–9) and about dealing with false teachers (1:10–16). In chapter 2 he instructed Titus about ministering to various groups in the church. Chapter 3 contains reminders about the importance of a godly life and provides instruction about how to live such a life.

Paul had led Titus to Christ and referred to him as "my true child in a common faith" (Titus 1:4). Titus isn't mentioned in Acts, but his name appears thirteen times in other New Testament writings. He apparently worked with Paul in Ephesus during Paul's third missionary journey. Titus had been stationed in Crete by Paul to set things in order. He warned Titus that his ministry in Crete was difficult because, "There are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. . . . One of Crete's own prophets has said it: 'Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons.' This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply" (1:10–13 NIV).

The book of Titus provides valuable information about church leadership and management, especially in difficult situations. Titus reminds us that the hardships of ministry demand the highest of godly qualifications for those who lead.

These three letters to young pastors reinforce the fact that the fundamental qualification for effective leadership in ministry is



VII. Philemon



Prison Epistles

the quality of the leader's own life. Before thinking about how to lead others, leaders must examine how willing they are to be devoted followers of our Lord.

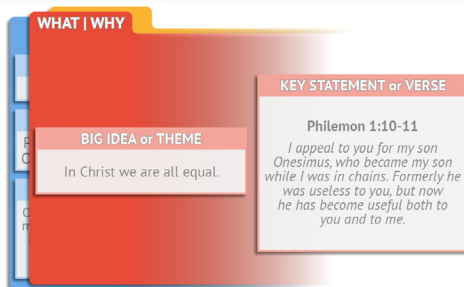
VII. Philemon

Philemon is the last of Paul's epistles. It is, along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, one of the Prison Epistles. Philemon lived in Colossae and was a slave owner. One of his slaves, a man named Onesimus, had stolen property from Philemon and escaped to Rome. He met Paul there and became a Christian. Although death was the penalty for escaped slaves, Onesimus was willing to return to Philemon in obedience to his Christian duty. By God's providential care, Philemon was a Christian and was one of Paul's friends. Paul wrote this letter to Philemon to persuade him to accept Onesimus, "no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a fellow man and as a brother in the Lord" (Philemon 1:16 NIV).

Paul neither supported nor condemned slavery in this brief letter. It was a legal fact of Roman society and not the focus of Paul's concern. His focus was to address Philemon's attitude toward Onesimus. In verses 10–11, Paul wrote, "I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son while I was in chains. Formerly he was useless to you, but now he has become useful both to you and to me." Paul's big idea is that in Christ we are all equal. The letter has three movements. Paul thanked God for the friendship he and Philemon shared (1:1–7). Next, he asked Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him—not only as a slave but also as a brother in Christ (1:8–16). Finally, Paul assured Philemon that if he wouldn't forgive Onesimus's debt for the money he had stolen, Paul would repay it himself (1:17–25).

Philemon illustrates the impact Christianity was having on the culture of that time. To suggest that a slave owner forgive an escaped slave and treat him as a brother reveals the miraculous transformation God was producing in people's lives through the gospel. Today it provides a powerful reminder that discrimination and hierarchy have no place in God's church.

VII. Philemon



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