

Understanding the Bible

Lesson 34: Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy, Titus), Philemon

I. Background Information

A. *Author:* the apostle Paul

B. *Recipients:*

1. Three different individual Christians, although these letters were also intended for the church as a whole
2. Timothy served as Paul's ministry associate for about twenty years; he was pastoring the church in Ephesus when these letters were written
3. Titus was also one of Paul's ministry associates; he was pastoring the church in Crete when this letter was written
4. Philemon was a member of the church in Colossae and was the owner of an escaped slave named Onesimus

C. *Occasion/Purpose:* to give ministry instructions to Timothy and Titus; to urge Philemon to forgive Onesimus and receive him as a brother

D. *Literary Genre:* epistle (letter)

II. Key Themes

A. *Redemption*

1. Frequent summaries of the gospel message as the announcement of Christ's finished work (1 Tim. 1:15; 2:3-6; 3:16; 6:13-16; 2 Tim. 1:10; 2:10-13)
2. Salvation is monergistic and it results in a changed life (Titus 3:3-8)
3. Sanctification is not by works but by grace (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 2:11-12)

B. *Ministry*

1. Church officers are to be exemplary Christians (1 Tim. 3:1-13; 4:8, 12, 16; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:2, 22; Titus 1:5-9)
2. Every church needs elders (Titus 1:5)
3. Distinction between ruling elders and teaching elders (1 Tim. 5:17)
4. Elders must be capable of upholding sound doctrine in a patient manner (1 Tim. 1:18-20; 4:6, 16; 2 Tim. 2:14-18, 24-26; Titus 1:9)
5. Preaching
 - a) Preaching the Word is at the very heart of the Christian ministry (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:2-5)
 - b) 2 Tim. 3:16-17 is a key text for our understanding of the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture
 - c) God's Word cannot be hindered by opposition (2 Tim. 2:8-9)
6. Evangelism
 - a) The church's holiness is vital to its missionary task (1 Tim. 3:14-15)
 - b) Timothy is reminded to do the work of an evangelist (2 Tim. 4:5), indicating that the God-ordained means of evangelism and discipleship is the church's ordinary means of grace ministry
7. Corporate prayer (1 Tim. 2:1-2, 8)
8. Benevolence ministry (1 Tim. 5:3-16)
9. Only qualified men are to teach publicly and exercise authority in the church (1 Tim. 2:9-15)

C. *False Teaching*

1. True doctrine needs to be defended against false teaching (1 Tim. 1:3-11)

2. Be on guard against asceticism (1 Tim. 4:3-5)
3. Ungodliness will proliferate in the last days; avoid getting entangled in it (2 Tim. 3:1-5)
4. In the last days, people will not endure sound teaching (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

D. *The Christian Life*

1. Sound doctrine is to be adorned by godly living (Titus 2:1-14)
2. Faithfulness in the face of suffering
 - a) Paul writes 2 Timothy while awaiting execution in Rome (2 Tim. 2:8-9)
 - b) Be ready suffer for the sake of the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8; 3:12)
3. Perseverance
 - a) Take hold of the gift of eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12)
 - b) Fight the good fight to the end (2 Tim. 4:7)
 - c) Live in light of the knowledge of Christ's eventual "appearing" (2 Tim. 4:1, 8)
 - d) Trust that the Lord will bring you into his kingdom (2 Tim. 4:18)
4. Relationships with fellow Christians
 - a) Honor older men and women as spiritual fathers and mothers; treat younger men and women as spiritual siblings (1 Tim. 5:1-2)
 - b) Forgive one another (Philemon)
 - c) Treat every Christian as a brother or sister in Christ (1 Tim. 6:2; Philemon 1:16)