

Through The Bible  
Session #54 – Titus & Philemon  
December 7, 2005

## Titus

Remember Titus is part of a grouping of letters known as the “Pastoral Epistles.” The Timothy letters also are in this correspondence.

Titus is the shortest of the pastoral letters but is packed with theological language. Titus takes much of what we find in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy and compresses the ideas into clear compact arguments. In fact, Titus has often been seen as a miniature 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy.

- In 1:1-3 we see the terms faith, truth, godliness, promise, hope, and eternal life. Each of these aspects of the Gospel are prominent parts of Paul's theology. The emphasis in Titus is to live out these virtues.
- Again and again, Titus emphasizes the life of virtue. How often do we emphasize virtue today?

Differences between 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy and Titus...

- Timothy was left in Ephesus to reform an established church. Titus was left on Crete to set up order that had not yet been established. The churches in Crete seem to be newer.
- In 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy, there's a heightened sense of urgency. In Titus, the pressure being put on the church by false teachers doesn't seem as dominant of an issue.
- Warnings in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy are against the false teachers. The warnings in Titus are more evangelistic – Paul wants to encourage behaviors that will be attractive to those outside the church.

Who was Titus?

- He was one of Paul's co-workers. We don't know as much about him because curiously, he is not mentioned in Acts.
- He does not seem to have the same status as Timothy as Silvanus. While we can't say for sure, it is often assumed Titus was older than Timothy.
- We first hear from him in Galatians 2.1-3. In the Galatians passage, Paul explains that he and Barnabas took Titus from Antioch to Jerusalem. And even though Titus is Greek, he was not compelled to be circumcised.
- Titus seems to be the main representative from Paul to Corinth during the problems spoken of in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians (see 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 2:13; 7:6, 13, 14; 8:6, 16, 23; 12:18).
- Titus also was responsible for gathering the Corinthian gift for the poor in Jerusalem (2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 8.16-24).
- In 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 4:10 we learn Titus has gone to Dalmatia.

- The designation in 1:4 "...my loyal child in the faith..." probably means that Paul brought Titus to Christ.

What was Titus' primary mission?

- He was left on the island of Crete to help the churches maintain order and get organized.
- His ministry seems to be focused on the poor, dispossessed, and marginalized. Titus' name appears 9 times in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians in connection with his efforts to develop a support system for the poor. This would have been a very tough task in Corinth because there was a divided church there.
- When Paul writes this letter, Titus was ministering to the Cretans – these were among the most despised, oppressed, and stereotyped people in the Mediterranean at this time. Who are those most despised, oppressed, and stereotyped in our world today? These are the folks to whom Titus ministered.

### Philemon

Philemon is the shortest of Paul's surviving letters though it is longer than other circular letters of the same period. Remember a circular letter was meant to be shared by several different congregations or groups.

- This letter is the most personal note from Paul we have.

Philemon appears to be the recipient of this letter. He appears to be the 'owner' of Onesimus.

- Onesimus could have started out with Paul as a young slave (AD 55-62) and then matured into a respected senior church leader by AD 115.
- The name Onesimus was not uncommon in this period.

What was Paul asking Philemon to do?

- It appears that Onesimus had run away from Philemon's household in Colossae. Perhaps he took some money or material goods when he went (v. 18). He could simply have overstayed his allotted time on an errand to Paul.
- In the ancient world, many slaves would risk their lives in attempts to escape. In our own nation's history, this also was common.
- While on the run, he appears to have run across Paul.
- Paul was put in a difficult position: (a) we don't know really what Paul's legal obligations might have been but Roman law stated anyone who gave hospitality to a runaway slave was obligated to repay the owner for that day's work that was lost; (b) if Paul harbored this slave, this really wouldn't have been good for Paul's reputation or the Gospel he was preaching.

- The Gospel preaches reconciliation (see Colossians 1.18-20; 3.12-17; 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 5.17-21). If the Gospel is supposed to bring together slave and free, Jew and Greek, then here is a test-case for what Paul has been preaching.

Was Paul's real aim reconciliation? Was Paul asking Philemon to send Onesimus back to him? Was Paul hinting at Philemon to give Onesimus his freedom (see vv. 15-16, 21)?

- We can't answer for sure some of these questions.
- We do know reconciliation was a part of the picture though.
- Verse 6, seems vitally important.

Where was Paul when writing Philemon?

- He was in prison (vv. 1, 9, 10, 23).
- The names Paul lists are comparable with those mentioned in Colossians so we believe this letter was sent from the same place as Colossians was.
- Where this location was is tough to nail down: could be Rome, could be Philippi, or could be Caesarea.
- Dating seems most likely to be mid-late 50's.

Why is Philemon in our Bible?

- Seems to be a real-life parable of the Gospel itself. Our reconciliation to God has opportunities for reconciliation in all our relationships with others.