

Study 10: Timothy & Titus

These three “Pastoral Epistles” do not fit into the Acts narrative. What happened to Paul after his period of house arrest? The pastoral epistles help us to sort out *part of the story*. There is also some information from the early secular writers that also helps us “*piece things together*”

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Notes for study 10: Timothy & Titus

Introduction

These three letters are referred to as “The Pastoral Epistles”, not because Paul, Timothy or Titus are elders (pastors), but because of the way Paul shepherds both Titus and Timothy and instructs them regarding the eldership.

Until here, Acts has helped us piece things together. But from here on the letters were written outside of the Acts narrative. What happened to Paul after his period of house arrest? The pastoral epistles help us to sort out *part of the story*. There is also some information from the early secular writers. [Whilst some Christians dismiss anything that is not scripture, we need to remember that Christianity is history and happened in an historical setting. The historical writers can help us to properly understand the things in scripture by providing a contextual framework. That is not to say that they should be trusted and scripture dismissed (as some atheistic and modernist writers want to do) when there is a discrepancy between “history” and scripture. However we should not “throw out the baby with the bathwater” by dismissing them altogether.] Much of this information comes from the second and third centuries and re-states the accepted traditions of the time. When we piece it together with the information from the Pastoral Epistles, we can start to understand what happened to Paul.

The pastoral epistles are rich in their doctrine and their practical values. They provide great insight into dealing with contemporary problems such as heresy, divisiveness, and the difficulties in leadership. They provide great encouragement to the reader especially when we realise Paul’s circumstances as he wrote them.

Background

Briefly: After his release from house arrest in Rome, Paul travelled again for a short time – a fourth missionary journey. After travelling for some time he wrote Titus and 1st Timothy probably from Corinth. He then moved on to Nicopolis to spend the winter, and was arrested and sent to Rome where he was imprisoned in the Mamertine prison. From this imprisonment he wrote 2nd Timothy shortly before his execution.

There were many other places that Paul visited on his fourth missionary journey. His journey to Rome is sometimes referred to as his fourth journey, in which case his latter journey would be his fifth. I shall refer to it as his fourth journey, and his journey to Rome as just that.

Paul’s first letter to Timothy suggests that after his release from prison, he travelled again for a short time. Some early writers say that he travelled back into Asia Minor, and then to Spain where he stayed for a two-year period. He then visited Asia Minor and Macedonia again, then Crete, before he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution.

During this imprisonment he wrote his last letter – 2nd Timothy – “...*the time has come for my departure, I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith...*” (2 Tim 4:6-7 NIV). Paul did not escape this time, and was put to death in Rome around AD 66 or 67.

In the letter to Philemon (written at the end of Paul’s first Roman imprisonment and dated at AD 62), Paul had a very optimistic outlook. He described how Onesimus was useful both to Philemon and to the aged Paul himself (Phm: 9,11). He shows his confidence in being released by being able to repay any debt that was owed to Philemon (vs 19), and (even more so) by his instruction to Philemon to prepare the guestroom for his arrival (vs 22).

Paul also expected to go to Philippi again (Php 1:26; 2:24), with tradition also suggesting a trip into the Lycus Valley in Asia Minor (Colosse and Laodicea).

Second Timothy is far more sombre. Paul knew that there would be no escape this time.

What we know from the Pastoral Epistles

After his release, Paul's intention was to visit Macedonia (especially Philippi – Php 1:27; 2:24), and then to make a trip to the Lycus valley (the churches at Colosse and Laodicea – Phm 22), which would include a visit to Ephesus.

It is more likely that the visit to Crete happened first, where he left Titus to set things in order (Tit 1:5). After leaving Crete, he went to Miletus by way of Corinth (2 Tim 4:20). At Miletus, Trophimus was left behind because he was sick (2 Tim 4:20). The visit to Ephesus followed, which would have included the visit to the Lycus valley. During this time in Ephesus, Paul disciplined the disorderly elders (1 Tim 1:20), and left Timothy behind to straighten out the disorderly elders (1 Tim 1:3) that Paul had warned about (Acts 20:30). During this time, Alexander the coppersmith greatly resisted Paul (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 4:14), and Paul was helped by Onesiphorus (2 Tim 1:18).

He then travelled on to Troas, where he left a cloak with Carpus (2 Tim 4:13), before going to Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3) and of course to Philippi. He then visited Corinth again, where he wrote the letters to Titus and 1st Timothy, and Erastus stayed behind (2 Tim 4:20) when Paul travelled on to Nicopolis to spend the winter. Nicopolis was a Roman Colony, and Paul would be safe from Jewish persecution in the city as a Roman Citizen.

Paul was sending Artemas or Tychicus to Crete to replace Titus. Titus was then to come to meet Paul at Nicopolis (Tit 3:13). It must have been Artemas who went to Crete, because Tychicus was sent to Ephesus (2 Tim 4:12) (presumably to replace Timothy, who was to come and join Paul in Rome – 2 Tim 4:9).

What we know from the Early Writers

Eusebius (4th century AD) wrote about Paul having been released from his first imprisonment, going on another missionary journey, and then returning to Rome again, where he was martyred. (Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History, Book 2, Chapter 22). There is overwhelming evidence outside of scripture, that Paul made a trip to Spain, and may have spent two years there, and also that he went to the north coast of Africa, and even to Britain. Since he writes from Rome, the extremity of the Empire in the west was Spain.

Clement, a disciple Paul mentioned in Php 4:3 wrote a letter from Rome to the church at Corinth around AD 96, and tells how Paul had preached the gospel "...he was a herald both in the east and in the west, he gained the noble renown of his faith, he taught righteousness throughout the whole world and, having reached the limit of the west, he bore testimony before the rulers, and so departed from the world and was taken up into the holy place..."¹

An unknown Christian writer in AD 170 wrote in what is known as Muratori's Canon, concerning Luke's account of Acts that "...he relates to Theophilus events of which he was an eye-witness...but he omits ...the journey of Paul when he left Rome for Spain"². This is not strictly correct, as we have noted in the book of Acts studies, that Luke wrote in the third person for much of the time, as he was not there.

Chrysostom (347-404 AD) mentions as an undoubted historical fact that "Paul after his residence in Rome departed to Spain".

Jerome (4th century AD) also records that "Paul was dismissed by Nero, that he might preach the gospel in the West", and:

¹ 1 Clement 5:6-7

² Bettenson, H: "Documents of the Christian Church" Oxford University Press; ISBN 0-19-283006-6; p.28
Piecing together the New Testament by Graeme Offer

“It ought to be said that at the first defence, the power of Nero having not yet been confirmed, nor his wickedness broken forth to such a degree as the histories relate concerning him, Paul was dismissed by Nero, that the gospel of Christ might be preached also in the West. As he himself writes in the second epistle to Timothy, at the time when he was about to be put to death, dictating his epistle as he did while in chains; ‘At my first defence no one took my part, but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account. But the Lord stood by me and strengthened me; that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion’ – clearly indicating Nero as a lion on account of his cruelty. ...He then, in the fourteenth year of Nero on the same day with Peter, was beheaded at Rome for Christ’s sake and was buried in the Ostian Way, the twenty-seventh year after our Lord’s passion.”³

Traditionally, a date of June 29th AD 68 is ascribed to Paul’s death,⁴ leaving a period of around six years between his release at the close of the Acts narrative and his death. If two of those years were spent in Spain, there still remains another four years (and certainly three, allowing imprisonment prior to his execution) for his travels.

There is some obvious difficulty in ascertaining where Paul went first – to Spain, to Macedonia, or to Crete. It is possible that he went to Spain early after his release from Rome (possibly direct from Rome as suggested by the early writers, and by Paul himself (Rom 15:24)). The return visits to Asia would then have followed after his time in Spain (and North Africa, and Britain).

Conybeare & Howson⁵ suggest that upon leaving Rome, Paul went to Macedonia and then to Ephesus. Whilst there he visited Colossae and Laodicea. After this time he went to Spain by ship to avoid the political upheavals of Rome, where he stayed for two years. From Spain he returned to Ephesus again where his predictions of apostasy from Acts 20 were coming to fruition. [We should note of course, that subsequent visits of Paul to Ephesus are at conflict with his inspired revelation that the elders “...*would see his face no more...*” (20:38). However, the evidence from the Pastoral Epistles strongly leads to the conclusion that Paul in fact did visit Ephesus again on at least one occasion.] Whilst at Ephesus, Paul is thought (by Conybeare and Howson) to have made trips firstly to Macedonia, and then to Crete. After leaving Ephesus, he went to Corinth, and then to Nicopolos to spend the winter, where he was arrested and sent to Rome for execution.

The Political Situation in Rome

The political situation in Rome had significantly changed since Paul’s first arrival in AD 60. It is commonly believed that Nero suffered from lead poisoning from the drinking vessels he used, and went mad as a result. Paul’s first imprisonment (and trial if he had one) had occurred not too long after the first period of Nero’s reign.

A greater contrast can hardly be imagined than that between Paul, one of the purest and noblest of men, and Nero, one of the basest and vilest of tyrants. The glorious first five years of Nero's reign (54–59) under the wise guidance of Seneca and Burrhus, make the other nine (59–68) only more hideous by contrast. We read his life with mingled feelings of contempt for his folly, and horror of his wickedness. The world was to him a comedy and a tragedy, in which he was to be the chief actor. He had an insane passion for popular applause; he played on the lyre; he sung his odes at supper; he drove his chariots in the circus; he appeared as a mimic on the stage, and compelled men of the highest rank to represent in dramas or in tableaux the obscenest of the Greek myths. But the comedian was surpassed by the

³ Jerome: “The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers” p.363

⁴ McBirnie, WS “The Search for the Twelve Apostles” Living Books, ISBN 0-8423-5839-0 p.287

⁵ Conybeare & Howson, p.745

tragedian. He heaped crime upon crime until he became a proverbial monster of iniquity. The murder of his brother (Britannicus), his mother (Agrippina), his wives (Octavia and Poppaea), his teacher (Seneca), and many eminent Romans, was fitly followed by his suicide in the thirty-second year of his age. With him the family of Julius Caesar ignominiously perished, and the empire became the prize of successful soldiers and adventurers⁶.

The great fire of Rome broke out on the night of July 18th AD 64, in which only four of the fourteen regions into which the city was divided, remained uninjured; three, including the whole interior city from the Circus to the Esquiline hill, were a shapeless mass of ruins; the remaining seven were more or less destroyed. The metropolis of the world assumed the aspect of a graveyard with a million mourners over the loss of irreparable treasures.

The cause of the conflagration is involved in mystery. Public rumor traced it to Nero, but when the fire broke out he was on the seashore at Antium, his birthplace.

To divert the general suspicion from himself, and at the same time to furnish new entertainment for his diabolical cruelty, Nero wickedly cast the blame upon the hated Christians. The police and people, under the influence of the panic created by the awful calamity, were ready to believe the worst slanders, and demanded victims. Some Christians were arrested, confessed their faith, and were "convicted not so much," says Tacitus, "of the crime of incendiarism as of hating the human race." Their Jewish origin, their indifference to politics and public affairs, their abhorrence of heathen customs, were construed into an "*odium generis humani*," and this made an attempt on their part to destroy the city sufficiently plausible to justify a verdict of guilty⁷.

The politics of Rome had changed since Paul's last visit. The brutal, base, and cruel adviser Tigellinus had replaced Nero's more moderate adviser Afrianus Burrus (to whom Paul had been delivered when he was sent to Rome). Both Nero and Tigellinus were heavily implicated in the fire in Rome, and seeking to divert the attention away, Nero blamed the Christians and proceeded to round them up, and have them tortured and put to death. This was considered to be punishment for the protests that the Christians had made against the moral decadence of the leaders.

Against this background, Tigellinus placed the order for the arrest of the Christians, and also their leaders – especially Paul. For two years Paul had been recognised in Rome as being one of the leaders, and had access into "*Caesar's household*" (Php 4:22). He was an obvious target.

The Second Imprisonment

Very shortly after writing in Titus 3:12 that he was "*planning to spend the winter in Nicopolos*", Paul was back under arrest in Rome. Nicopolos was a Roman Colony, and the arrest was easy. Paul was transported back to Rome to face the trumped up charges from Caesar himself and his advisers. This time there could be no appeal.

Tradition has it that Paul was confined to the lower dungeons in the Mamertine prison. However, the fact that Onesimus had to search hard to locate and find Paul (2 Tim 1:17) suggests that he might have been held elsewhere.

⁶ Schaff, Philip, "History of the Christian Church – Volume 1 – Apostolic Christianity" WM. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan. ISBN 0-8028-8047-9; p.378.

⁷ Schaff, Ibid, p.379.

Some brethren still managed to keep in touch with Paul, and sent their greetings to Timothy. They included Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, “*and all the brethren*” (2 Tim 4:21). But communication was not as easy as it had been at the earlier imprisonment.

Paul was given a preliminary hearing. At that trial, everyone deserted him (2 Tim 4:16-17). This is understandable in the face of the conflicts. The Romans were trying to persecute the Christians, and to stand beside Paul at the trial meant inviting the Romans to take you as the next victim. Paul knew that the end was near, and hence he wrote in the second letter to Timothy “...*there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness...*” (2 Tim 4:8 KJV). Paul could see the crown of joy set before him. The immediate future might have been grim, but the future beyond the grave is filled with hope and joy.

The Death of Paul

Some traditions place the few months of Paul’s imprisonment at a time when Peter came to Rome and joined him in the prison, and at that time wrote his two epistles.

The traditional evidence has Paul being killed in the last year of Nero’s reign in AD 68, and Peter and Paul being finally tried and condemned together. As a Roman citizen, Paul was beheaded and given a quick death whilst Peter is believed to have been crucified, traditionally upside down. Jesus told Peter that he would not die until was old, and that it would be under duress:

“...*Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."*¹⁸ *I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go."*¹⁹ *Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"...*” (John 21:18-19 NIV)

As we look at Paul’s life of sufferings, and the things he went through for the cause of Christ, his own words best sum up his life of dedication:

“...*For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain...*”. Philippians 1:21

Titus – Date and Occasion

Titus parallels first Timothy, and was written about the same time. Paul visited the churches on Crete with Titus, and he writes to instruct him to formalize the leadership in the churches.

Because we don’t know exactly where Paul went, and when he went there, it is impossible to pin down a time and place for the letter. Two things are evident. Firstly, Paul has not yet arrived in Nicopolos (Tit 3:12), which makes the likely places either Corinth or Ephesus. Secondly, there are strong similarities between Titus and 1st Timothy, which suggest that they were both written at (or around) the same time. Both letters discuss the qualifications of elders, however there are subtle differences in the circumstances. Titus was instructed to appoint elders (Tit 1:5) whilst Timothy was instructed to bring the disorderly elders at Ephesus into order (1 Tim 1:3). Consequently, 1st Timothy could not have been written from Ephesus, and so it is also a less likely place of writing the epistle to Titus, which makes Corinth the more likely location for both.

This makes the time of writing at around 64 or 65 AD before the winter in Nicopolos, after which Paul was taken to Rome, imprisoned, and executed.

Paul gives the occasion of the letter in 1:5. He had left Titus behind in Crete to set the church(es) in order, and he now writes to instruct the newly appointed elders on how to behave and to reject false teaching. Apparently Zenas and Apollos were sent with the letter, and their journey to Crete probably marked the occasion for Paul’s writing. [Paul knew that they were there, and were going to travel away from Crete. The most likely explanation is that they had been with Paul in Corinth, and so he knew their travel plans.]

By the time of the letter, Paul had known and worked with Titus for around 20 years, almost like his relationship with Timothy. Paul describes him as “...my true son in our common faith...” (1:4), which suggests that Paul may have converted him.

The origin of the churches on Crete is unknown, but we do know that there were many, since Titus had been instructed to “...appoint elders in every city...” (1:5). There were “...Cretans and Arabs...” present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11), so it is very likely that they took the gospel back to Crete during the dispersion (Acts 8:4).

Cretans were famously known for being proverbial liars and shameless dishonest people. It was a place of shams and scams. False doctrine was a virtual cottage industry, circulated by men who wanted to make a fast buck. It was a land immersed in the culture of Greek Mythology. They believed that it was the birthplace of the Greek god Zeus, and probably a lot like the Athens in which Paul preached. False heresies abounded on the island, with people welcoming more heresy as fast as they could imagine it.

The Cretans had an earned, deserved bad reputation. Paul stated the prevailing opinion of Cretans in his day when he quoted one of their own poets, Epimenides, who lived about 600 BC, who wrote, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." Cicero wrote: "Indeed, moral principles are so divergent that the Cretans consider highway robbery to be honourable" (The Republic, 3.4.15). Polybius wrote: "Their laws go as far as possible in letting them acquire land to the extent of their power...and money is held in such high honour among them that its acquisition is not only regarded as necessary, but as most honourable. So much in fact do sordid love of gain and lust for wealth prevail among them that (the Cretans) are the only people in the world in whose eyes no gain is disgraceful" (Histories 6.46.1-3.). Diodorus of Sicily related the story of a Cretan soldier who betrayed his army to the Romans. He scorned Roman citizenship; he wanted money (Histories 6.47.5).

Titus – Brief Outline

Paul was very concerned that the people living in the pagan culture of Crete avoid trying to moralise cultural behaviour through political avenues to create some kind of Christian culture. They must be able to demonstrate to their society that God saves people from sin. Culture is not changed externally, but preaching the gospel changes men internally. We don't even belong to this culture, we are simply aliens, and our land is heaven.

The following outline is taken from Fee & Stuart⁸

- 1:1- 4 *Salutation*
- 1:5- 9 *Appointing Elders*
- 1:10-16 *Opposing False Teachers*
- 2:1 - 10 *Godly Living for Various Social Groups*
- 2:11- 15 *The Basis for Godly Living*
- 3:1 - 8 *The People of God in the World*
- 3:9 - 11 *Final Indictment of the False Teachers*
- 3:12 - 15 *Concluding Personal Notes and Greetings*

1st Timothy – Date and Occasion

First Timothy parallels the letter to Titus. Paul has revisited Ephesus and disciplined some of the elders, and left Timothy behind to finalise things. Corinth is the most likely place of writing around 64 or 65 AD before the winter in Nicopolos. Whilst both letters discuss the qualifications

⁸ Fee & Stuart, p.385

of elders, there are subtle differences in the circumstances. Titus was instructed to appoint elders (Tit 1:5) whilst Timothy was to bring the disorderly elders at Ephesus into order (1 Tim 1:3).

Paul is quite explicit in the purpose of the letter: “...*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...*” (2:3:14-15 NIV).

About 10 years had elapsed since the meeting with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, and the digression from amongst them had now come to fruition, just as he had predicted (Acts 20:30). He names Hymenaeus and Alexander (1:1:20). Presumably Hymenaeus was the ringleader, as he is named first here, and again in 2:2:17.

First Timothy lacks much of the ordinary thanks-giving and prayers that Paul normally begins with in his letters, and also the personal greetings from other brethren at the close – compared also to 2nd Timothy. It is very business like. Timothy is given the instructions rather than the church, as the problems in the leadership are unlikely to get a fair hearing. Consequently, Paul has empowered Timothy to correct the situation, and he gives an emphasis on the qualifications that are required in the elders rather than on the functions that they are required to perform.

1st Timothy – Brief Outline

The following outline is taken from Fee & Stuart⁹

- 1:1- 2 *Salutation*
- 1:3- 20 *First Charge to Timothy*
- 2:1-15 *Instructions on Community Matters*
- 3:1 - 13 *Qualifications for Church Leaders*
- 3:14- 4:5 *The Purpose for the Letter*
- 4:6 - 16 *Renewed Charge to Timothy*
- 5:1 - 6:2b *On Widows and Elders (and Slaves)*
- 6:2c - 10 *Final Indictment of the False Teachers*
- 6:11-20 *Final Charge to Timothy*

2nd Timothy – Date and Occasion

Second Timothy was written at the very end of Paul's life, and was the last (preserved) letter that he wrote. In contrast to the business like approach in other Pastoral Epistles, Paul is very melancholy as he reflects on his life of service, and the finality of the approaching situation.

Paul was recognised as a leader of the Christians, and was brought to Rome as a part of Nero's retribution after the great fire. Conybeare & Howson¹⁰ give a brief timeline for these events:

- AD 64 The Great fire at Rome (July 19th)
- AD 66 The Jewish War begins (culminating in destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70)
- AD 68 (Spring) Paul is in prison at Rome, writes 2 Timothy
- AD 68 (Summer) Paul is executed (May or June)
- AD 68 Death of Nero in the middle of June.

We can be fairly certain of the time and place for the letter around 68 AD after spending the winter in Nicopolos, and before his execution in Rome. Paul was dreading the coming winter (2:4:13,21) so the time of writing was most likely Spring, before Nero's death in June of AD 68.

⁹ Fee & Stuart, p.376

¹⁰ Conybeare & Howson, p.834

The occasion of the letter is a little harder to gauge. Paul is summoning Timothy to come to him, and he would be replaced by Tychicus. Timothy is still in Ephesus, and has been unsuccessful in bringing the disorderly elders into order. He mentions Hymenaeus again (2:2:17) and Alexander (2:4:14), (compared with 1:1:20). Paul had disciplined some of them himself (1:1:20), although it seems they had refused to accept it, and continued to influence the brethren. Despite Timothy's discipline of them, they were still influencing the brethren.

2nd Timothy – Brief Outline

The following outline is taken from Fee & Stuart¹¹

- 1:1- 5 *Salutation and Thanksgiving*
- 1:6- 2:13 *First Appeal*
- 2:14 - 3:9 *Context for the Appeal: The False Teachers*
- 3:10 – 4:8 *Final Appeal*
- 4:9-18 *The First Reason for the Letter*
- 4:19- 22 *Final Greetings*

As Paul writes his last letter to Timothy, his *son in the faith*, he reflects on the loyalty shown to him over his life of ministry. He had already faced a preliminary hearing (2:4:16), and had been abandoned in his defence by his friends. The situation is grave, and Paul is facing execution as being one of the leaders of the 'sect'. Many christians had already been put to death, and to stand in defence of Paul would most likely result in the same treatment. Paul lists many of his co-workers who had departed and left him alone:

Demas	Has loved the world and departed for Thessalonica	2:4:10
Crescens	Has departed for Galatia	2:4:10
Titus	Has left for Dalmatia	2:4:10
Tychicus	Has been sent by Paul to Ephesus (with the letter)	2:4:12

This was one of the low points in Paul's life, like the time in Corinth where the Lord assured him that *He has much people in this city* (Acts 18:10). On this occasion, Paul says "...*But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me...*" (2:4:17). Luke is Paul's only accomplice who is still with him (2:4:11). He appeals to Timothy to remain loyal to Paul and to the gospel, especially in the face of the persecutions and hardships.

¹¹ Fee & Stuart, p.381