

CHAPTER 8

PAUL'S EPISTLES

Paul wrote 13 canonical epistles, and perhaps also the book of Hebrews (Hebrews is anonymous, and will be included in a later chapter of the notes). They are grouped by the times they were written and their general content.

Content	Paul's Activities	Epistle
Eschatological	Second Missionary Journey	1 Thessalonians
		2 Thessalonians
Soteriological	Third Missionary Journey	Galatians
		1 Corinthians
		2 Corinthians
		Romans
Christological	First Roman Imprisonment	Ephesians
		Colossians
		Philemon
		Philippians
Pastoral	Final Travels	1 Timothy
		Titus
		2 Timothy

Eschatological Epistles

Both these short epistles were written to the newly-formed church in Thessalonica, in the province of Macedonia. Thessalonica was a large city (ca. 200,000 population) on the Egnatian Way. It naturally was the next city to visit after Philippi. It was established in 315 B.C. and named after the stepsister of Alexander the Great. There was a large Jewish population there.

Paul founded the church there on his second missionary journey. He was there only three weeks. In that short time he won over many Jews and even more Gentiles. Because of jealousy the Jews stirred up a mob against him, who chased him from the city, leaving Silas and Timothy behind in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-10). Paul went to Athens, from which he sent Timothy back to help the Thessalonians (and he sent Silas to somewhere else in Macedonia); Paul went on to Corinth, where Timothy and Silas rejoined him (1 Thess 3:1-2, 6; Acts 18:5). Paul had wanted

to stay in Thessalonica and help the new Christians there, or else to return soon to them, but had been prevented by circumstances (1 Thess 2:18).

Both 1 Thess and 2 Thess are called the Eschatological Epistles, since they emphasize the second coming of Jesus. They probably were written within a few weeks of each other.

1 Thessalonians

- Written from Corinth, A.D. 49-50

[The subtitles at the end of 1 Thess and 2 Thess in the KJV are not part of the original texts. They state the epistles were written from Athens (inferred from 1 Thess 3:1). The verses cited above in 1 Thess and Acts show the letters to be written from Corinth.]

- Emphases of 1 Thessalonians
 - A time of persecution (2:14; cf. Acts 17:10)
 - A defense of Paul's conduct when in Thessalonica, and for his present absence from them (ch. 2-3)
 - Importance of consistent Christian living (ch. 4)
 - Moral purity (4:3-7)
 - Brotherly love (4:9-10)
 - Daily work (4:11-12)
 - Second coming of the Lord (at the end of each chapter—1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:13-18; 5:23)

2 Thessalonians

- Written from Corinth, just weeks after 1 Thessalonians
- Circumstances –
 - Persecution of church still going on (2 Thess 1:4)
 - False teachers coming in (1 Thess 3:5; cf. 2 Thess 2:3)
 - Apparently misquoting Paul and even sending forged letter supposedly from him (2 Thess 2:2; 3:17)

- Problems understanding Paul’s eschatology (2 Thess 2:2-3)
- Continuing problem with church members living disorderly lives (2 Thess 3:14-15)
- General content:
 - Comfort in persecution (ch. 1)
 - Signs of the Lord’s return (ch. 2)
 - The “abomination of desolation” (2:3-4)
 - The “falling away” (the *apostasia* 2:3)
 - Need to keep the doctrine (2:15)
 - Discipline for disorderly brethren (ch. 3)
 - Not working to support themselves (3:6-15)
 - Need for church discipline (3:6, 10, 14-15)

Soteriological Epistles

These are the four longest and most important of Paul’s epistles. They all were written during Paul’s third missionary journey (Galatians may have been written after the first missionary journey); they reflect his mature concerns for the Gentile churches, both doctrinally and practically.

All critical scholars have recognized these four epistles as having been written by Paul himself. For this reason conservative scholars such as J. Gresham Machen have based many of their arguments about Pauline theology on these four letters. These scholars have shown that these four letters provide exactly the same theology that one finds in the other Pauline letters and in the book of Acts.

These four major letters are often called the Soteriological Epistles because they spell out and emphasize the doctrines concerning personal salvation—its means and its aftermath; the name comes from the Greek word *soteria*, “salvation.”

Galatians

Galatians and Romans were the two books that led Martin Luther to rediscover the Pauline theology of salvation by faith alone, a doctrine lost to most of the church of his day. Luther's prefaces to those two books had great impact on other Protestant leaders, and his commentary on Galatians is one of the seminal works for the Protestant Reformation.

Destination of Galatians

While the destination of Paul's other Soteriological is clear, the destination of Galatians is somewhat disputed. All agree that it is addressed to churches in the Roman province of Galatia (Gal 1:2; 3:1). The question concerns the part of the province indicated. Originally the province included the north central portion of Asia Minor, where the original Gauls had come to live about 250 B.C. (*Gaul* is the old name for modern France). In 25 B.C. Amyntas, their last king, willed the territory to the Romans. Earlier scholars assumed these were the churches addressed. Later it was discovered that by the time of Paul the Romans had extended the borders of Galatia to include a large area to the south, including the cities Paul visited on his first missionary journey. This newer region came to be known as South Galatia, while the original part of the province is called North Galatia.

The question is, to which area was Paul writing? When Paul wrote Galatians, he had already visited the area at least twice (Gal 4:13), and had been at least two times to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18; 2:1). Both theories must account for these facts.

North Galatian theory

- Traditional theory
- Major exponent of theory – Joseph Barber Lightfoot (d. 1889), *The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians* (1865)
- Arguments:
 - Paul would have visited North Galatia on 2nd and 3rd missionary journeys (Acts 16:6; 18:23)
 - “Phrygia and Galatia” would be taken as separate areas
 - Cities of Galatia would include Pessinus, Ancyra, Tavium
 - Use of “disciples” in Acts 18:23 instead of “churches” would strengthen argument
 - Admits that Paul usually uses names of provinces (1 Cor 16:1; Gal 1:2; 2 Tim 4:10); but in Gal 3:1 it would offend them, whereas the insulting term is more appropriate for ethnic group in North

South Galatian theory

- Newer theory, now held by most scholars
- Important proponent, Sir William M. Ramsay, *St. Paul, the Traveller and the Roman Citizen* (1897), and *A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (1899)
- Paul would have visited this area on all three missionary journeys (Acts 13:14 – 14:24; 16:6; 18:23)
 - “Phrygia and Galatia” would be taken as “Phrygian Galatia,” that is, the part of Galatia that is in the ethnic region of Phrygia
 - Would include Antioch-Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe
- Arguments:
 - Would make Luke's emphasis in Acts agree with Paul's emphasis in this epistle
 - Judaizers would naturally go to the southern cities first
 - Paul (and Luke) normally use provincial names, not ethnic names (Acts 2:10; 18:24; 19:29; 20:4; 2 Cor 6:11; 9:2, 4), why not in Gal 3:1?
 - An advantage – if the background in Acts is known for these churches, it gives more meaning to Galatians

Date of Galatians

The timing of the book of Galatians is one of the vexed questions of NT scholarship. If Galatians was written later than A.D. 49 (the date of the Jerusalem Council), then Paul seems to be describing the Jerusalem Council in Gal 2:1-10. This would require us to harmonize the accounts of the Council in Gal 2 and Acts 15. On the other hand, if Paul wrote Galatians before A.D. 49 (that is, before the Council), then Paul seems to be describing the Famine Visit in Gal 2:1-10, and there is no need to harmonize that account with Acts 15. Likewise, the circumstances of Paul's dispute with Peter (Gal 2:11-21) would be different, depending on whether this dispute took place before or after the Council. All the various positions are defended by conservative scholars.

[For a good summary of the arguments, see J. Gresham Machen, “The Triumph of Gentile Freedom,” in *The Origin of Paul's Religion* (1925), 71-113.]

Early date

- After first missionary journey, before the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 48-49)
- Written from Antioch
- View supported by F. F. Bruce and many modern conservative scholars
- Arguments:
 - South Galatian theory required for this date
 - Two visits to Galatia (Gal 4:13) would be the going and coming route of the first missionary journey
 - Two visits to Jerusalem (Gal 1:18; 2:1) would be his first visit after his conversion and the Famine Visit
 - Main argument: Paul does not appeal to the decision of the Jerusalem Council to confirm his position that circumcision is not necessary (it seems natural that he would have appealed to that decision if Galatians was written after the Council)
 - Secondary argument: Some differences between the accounts of Paul's visit in Gal 2 and the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15

Middle date

- After the Jerusalem Council, during or after the time of his second missionary journey (A.D. 50)
- Written from Corinth, or from Antioch
- Arguments:
 - South Galatian view required for this date
 - Two visits to Galatia would be his first and second missionary journeys
 - Two visits to Jerusalem would be his first visit and the Jerusalem Council (the Famine Visit would not be mentioned)
 - Main argument: Gal 2:1-10 seems to parallel Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 – significant similarities; differences are minor and can be harmonized
 - Secondary arguments:

- Easier to work out chronology for 14 or 17 years after conversion (Gal 2:1)
- Paul did not rely on Council decision in his argument because he was defending his own apostolic authority

Late date

- During third missionary journey (A.D. 51-54)
- Written from Ephesus, Macedonia, or Corinth
- View supported by J. B. Lightfoot, J. Gresham Machen
- Arguments:
 - Either North Galatian or South Galatian theory would work with this date
 - Visits to Galatia would be Paul's three missionary journeys (South Galatian theory) or his second and third missionary journeys (North Galatian theory)
 - Visits to Jerusalem would be his first visit and the Jerusalem Council
 - Main argument: All arguments for middle date, plus Galatians very similar in style and content to Romans, written from Corinth on third missionary journey (cf. Lightfoot commentary, 45-48)

Purpose and content of Galatians

Jewish-Christian theological opponents of Paul ("Judaizers") said that it was necessary for Gentile Christians to be circumcised and keep the Jewish laws (Gal 1:6; 5:2-4; cf. Acts 15:1). They also undermined confidence in Paul's leadership, stating that he was less authoritative than the original apostles of Jesus.

- Summary verse for Galatians: Gal 2:16
- Brief outline:
 - Paul's independent apostleship (Gal 1-2)
 - Justification by faith alone (Gal 3 – 5:12)
 - Abraham's seed (Gal 3)

- Allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Gal 4)
- Practical exhortations (Gal 5:13 – ch. 6)

Peculiarities of Galatians

- No beginning commendation
- Argument with Peter (Gal 2)
- Strong against heresy (Gal 1:8-9; 5:12)
- Second most autobiographical epistle (after 2 Corinthians)
- Wrote ending himself (Gal 6:11-18, “large letters”)
- Paul’s eye trouble (Gal 4:15; 6:11; cf. 2 Cor 12:7)

1 Corinthians

City of Corinth

- Capital of Roman province of Achaia
- On south end of isthmus joining Aegean and Adriatic Seas
- On shipping route between Rome and Asia
- Noted for immorality and vice
- Temple of Aphrodite (goddess of love) on mountain, with thousands of prostitutes

Church at Corinth

- Founded by Paul on second missionary journey (Acts 18)
- 1½ –year ministry; lived with Aquila and Priscilla
- Apollos preached there later (Acts 19:1)

Circumstances of 1 Corinthians

- Paul now on third missionary journey, staying in Ephesus for ca. 3 years
- Concerned about immorality in Corinthian church; wrote lost letter, not to company with immoral people (1 Cor 5:9)
- Timothy sent through Macedonia to Corinth to help church (1 Cor 4:17; 16:10; Acts 19:22)
- Reports to Paul from the church:
 - Household of Chloe (1 Cor 1:11)
 - Delegation of Stephanus, Fortunatus, Achaicus (1 Cor 16:17)
- Serious problems in the church continue (see below)
- Church asked questions (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 15:12; 16:1)
- Paul wanted to prepare them for his collection

Content of 1 Corinthians

1. Commendation for their faith (1 Cor 1)
2. Condemnation of schisms (1 Cor 1-4)
3. Discipline for open immorality (1 Cor 5)
4. Believers going to law (1 Cor 6)
5. Marriage, divorce, celibacy (1 Cor 7)
6. Liberty of conscience (meat offered to idols, 1 Cor 8-10)
7. Men and women in the church (1 Cor 11)
8. The Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11)
9. Spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12-14)
 - a. Great love chapter (1 Cor 13)
10. Great resurrection chapter (1 Cor 15)

11. Collection appeal and conclusion (1 Cor 16)

2 Corinthians

Background for 2 Corinthians

- Paul's continuing concern for church
- Quick visit from Ephesus to the church (2 Cor 12:14; 13:1-2)
- Paul's sending them the "letter of many tears" (2 Cor 2:3-4, 9; 7:8 – may be 1 Corinthians)
- Sending helpers: Timothy sent to Macedonia (Acts 19:22; cf. 1 Cor 4:17; 16:10), Titus sent to Corinth (2 Cor 7:13-15; 8:6)
- Paul concerned to hear from Titus
 - Leaves Ephesus for Troas (2 Cor 2:12-13)
 - Crosses over into Macedonia, finally meets Titus, who has a good report (2 Cor 2:13; 7:5-7; cf. Acts 20:1-2)
- Collected good offering in Macedonia
- Writes to Corinthians with joy and gratitude

Content of 2 Corinthians

1. Introduction (2 Cor 1)
2. Restore the penitent sinner (2 Cor 2; cf. 1 Cor 5)
3. "The Glory of the Ministry" (2 Cor 3-7)
4. Preparation for the collection (2 Cor 8-9)
5. Defense of Paul's apostleship (2 Cor 10-12)
6. Our self-examination; conclusion (2 Cor 13)

Special points of interest in 2 Corinthians

- Good result of church discipline (2 Cor 2:1-11)
- Important separation passage (2 Cor 6:14 – 7:1)
- Catalog of Paul's sufferings up to the third missionary journey (2 Cor 11:23-33)
- Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Cor 12:7-10)
- The most autobiographical and emotional of Paul's epistles

Romans

The church at Rome

- Founded early, perhaps immediately after the first Pentecost (Acts 2:10)
- Peter not yet in Rome (still in Jerusalem in A.D. 49, when edict of Claudius expelling Jews from Rome; cf. Acts 18:2)
- Paul planning to go there after taking offering to Jerusalem at end of third missionary journey
- Large, well-known church (Rom 1:8; 15:23; ch. 16)
- Majority of the church Gentile Christians (Rom 1:5-6; 11:13, 28-31)
- A Large minority of Jewish Christians (Rom 2:17; 3:1; 4:1; ch. 9-11; 16:3)

Occasion of writing Romans

- Paul wintering in Corinth at end of third missionary journey, about to take offering to Jerusalem (Acts 20:2-3)
- Sent letter to church in Rome by Phoebe, a "deaconess" in the church in Cenchrea, near Corinth; she was apparently traveling to Rome on business (Rom 16:1-2)
- Paul plans to take the offering to Jerusalem, and then travel to Rome and on west to Spain (Rom 1:9-15; 15:23-29)

- Purpose of letter:
 - Teach doctrine, especially justification; prevent errors like those in Galatia
 - Encourage church to maturity and unity
 - Prepare church for his visit and seek their assistance with his journey to Spain

Content of Romans

1. Introduction (Rom 1)
2. Man guilty before God (Rom 1-3)
3. Justification by faith alone (Rom 3-4)
4. Fruits of justification (Rom 5-8)
5. Israel's relation to the church (Rom 9-11)
6. Practical Christian living (Rom 12-14)
7. Paul's missionary strategy (Rom 15)
8. Greetings and conclusions (Rom 16)

Points of interest in Romans

- Lengthy introduction; many names in conclusion
- Most treatise-like epistle
- Luther's salvation verse – Rom 1:17
- Classic natural theology passage (Rom 1:18-32)
- Abraham and David justified by faith alone (Rom 4)
- Baptism, symbol of death (Rom 6:1-10)
- Anti-perfectionism passage (Rom 7:15-25)
- Assurance chapter (Rom 8)

- Missionary passage (Rom 10:13-17)
- All Israel to be saved (Rom 11:26-32)
- Classic government passage (Rom 13:1-7)
- True Christian liberty (Rom 14)
- Separation from heresy (Rom 16:17)

Prison Epistles

After Paul's third missionary journey he was arrested in Jerusalem by the Jews and turned over to the Romans. For two years he was incarcerated in the palace in Caesarea, then took his voyage to Rome, where he was held for two years in a hired house, chained to a Roman soldier. This was his first Roman imprisonment.

During his two years in Rome Paul wrote four shorter epistles, the Prison Epistles. Sometimes they are called his Christological Epistles, since they emphasize the doctrine of Christ.

Whereas all agree that Paul wrote the major Soteriological Epistles, many critical scholars claim that these Prison Epistles were not written by Paul. However, careful study reveals that the evidence strongly supports Paul as the author, in agreement with the universal tradition of the church.

Three of these letters, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, were written and sent together. The fourth letter, Philippians, was written separately, late in his imprisonment.

Ephesians

Recipients of Ephesians

Paul established the large and influential church in Ephesus during his third missionary journey. From there the gospel spread throughout the province of Asia, reaching the city of Colossae in the Lycus Valley, where Philemon lived and sponsored a church meeting in his home.

Ephesians is missing the city name in several of the earliest MSS, indicating that it originally was a circular letter, intended for all the churches in the region around Ephesus. It appears to be a circular letter, since there are no personal greetings, and Paul seems to know

them by report (cf. Eph 1:15; 3:2-4; 4:21). If so, it might have followed the Roman mail route through Asia, just as Revelation later would do (Rev 2-3: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea). It thus may be the letter referred to in Col 4:16 as the “letter from Laodicea.”

It seems that Paul was concerned about a new doctrinal development in the region—a sort of proto-gnosticism. There was a tendency to minimize the importance of simple faith in Christ. Ephesians and Colossians both emphasize the superiority of the person of Christ, and the Christian’s need to find all sufficiency in him.

Paul sent two men with the three letters (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon), his messenger Tychicus and the recently converted runaway slave Onesimus (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-8). They were to travel to Ephesus, the other cities in the route, and end in Colossae. Ephesians was for all the churches; Colossians for the church in Colossae in particular, and Philemon was for that same church and for Philemon and his family.

Content of Ephesians

1. Doctrinal section: Christ the Head of the Church (Eph 1-3)
2. Practical section (Eph 4-6)

Points of interest in Ephesians

- Often called “the epistle of the ascension” (cf. Eph 1:20-23; 2:6)
- Most solemn and liturgical epistle
- Important predestination chapter (Eph 1)
- Two long sentences in Greek (Eph 1:3-14, 15-23)
- Two beautiful prayers (Eph 1:16-23; 3:14-21)
- Dispensational mystery (Eph 3:1-12)
- Unity of believers (Eph 4:1-16)
- Family relations (Eph 5:22 – 6:9)
- The Christian’s armor (Eph 6:10-20); cf. William Gurnall, *The Christian in Complete Armour* (1655-1662; 1,189 pages)

Colossians

The church at Colossae

Colossae was located in the Lycus Valley, near the cities of Laodicea and Hierapolis. Paul had not been there personally (Col 1:4, 7-8; 2:1). The pastor of the church, Epaphras, was now in Rome with Paul (Col 1:7; 4:12-13; Phlm 23).

The church may have been started by Epaphras, or perhaps by Philemon. It may be that Philemon was a convert of Paul's (cf. Phlm 19).

The church apparently met in the home of Philemon, his wife Apphia, and his son Archippus (Phlm 1-2). It seems that during the absence of Epaphras Archippus was acting as pastor (Col 4:17). It was to this church that the runaway slave Onesimus belonged (Col 4:9).

The “Colossian heresy”

Paul was concerned about doctrinal developments in that region (Col 2:1; 4:16). These deviations were best answered by emphasizing the all-sufficiency of Christ (Col 1:9-10; 2:3, 10). The particular mix of false teachings or tendencies dealt with in Colossians has been called the “Colossian heresy.” It has three main elements:

1. Jewish element: circumcision, new moons, etc. (Col 2:11-16)
2. Ascetic element: denial of physical needs or pleasures (Col 2:20-23)
3. Speculative element: secret or mysterious knowledge (Col 2:8, 18)

[For a good discussion of the Colossian heresy, see J. B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon* (1875, revised 1879, reprinted Zondervan 1971), 73-113.]

Content of Colossians

1. Doctrinal section: Christ the head of the universe (Col 1-2)
2. Practical section (Col 3-4)

Points of interest in Colossians

- Classic deity of Christ chapter (Col 1)

- True reconciliation (Col 1:20-23)
- Family life (Col 3:18 – 4:1)
- Mark restored to Paul (Col 4:10)
- The “epistle from the Laodiceans” [may be Ephesians] (Col 4:16)

Philemon

Philemon’s slave Onesimus had escaped and fled to Rome, perhaps stealing money from Philemon first (cf. Phlm 11, 18). But now he has met Paul in prison and been converted to Christ (Phlm 10). He was a help to Paul in prison, but now Paul is sending him back to Philemon with this letter. Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus, now not as a slave, but as a brother in the Lord, to forgive any debt for Paul’s sake, and perhaps even to send Onesimus back to help Paul (Phlm 8-21).

By asserting the basic equality of people before the Lord, and their brotherhood in Christ, Paul effectively taught that the institution of chattel slavery was contrary to God’s order and to the place we have in Christ. It was Christian teaching that led to the eventual abolition of slavery in nations where Christianity had the most influence.

Paul also wrote Philemon to tell him to prepare a room, for Paul planned to visit Colossae after being released from prison in Rome (Phlm 22).

Philippians

This, the last of Paul’s Prison Epistles, was written shortly before his release (Phil 1:25-26; 2:24). It expresses his confidence for the future and his joy in serving Christ and fellowshiping with the saints in Philippi.

The church at Philippi

Philippi was a major city on the Egnatian Way, the Roman road going east-west through Macedonia. The city was settled by veterans of the army of Octavian and Mark Anthony after their victory over Cassius and Brutus in the Roman civil war. As a reward, the city was granted the status of a Roman colony—meaning that its citizens were all automatically Roman citizens (Acts 16:12). Paul capitalized on this civic pride of citizenship twice in this epistle (Phil 1:27; 3:20).

Paul established this church on his second missionary journey; it was his first church in Europe (Acts 16). Luke apparently lived there for a while between Paul's second and third missionary journeys (cf. the "we sections"). The church started small, except for Lydia the seller of purple cloth, the congregation was primarily Gentile.

In spite of its small size, and the poverty of the region, this church loved Paul and generously sent him several offerings. They gave to him twice when he was in Thessalonica, and once when he was in Corinth (Phil 4:15-16; 2 Cor 11:9). In addition, they gave generously to his offering for the saints in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-6; 2 Cor 8:1-5).

Now, when Paul was in prison in Rome, the Philippian church once again sent him a gift, along with the services of one of their members, Epaphroditus (Phil 4:14, 18).

Background of Philippians

Paul's imprisonment was nearing its end. The Lord had used him to evangelize much of the Roman military establishment there, including members of the imperial household (Phil 1:12-14; 4:22).

Leading up to this epistle, there had been contact between Paul and the church:

- Philippians hear Paul is in prison.
- Philippians send Epaphroditus and an offering to Paul (Phil 4:14, 18).
- While in Rome, Epaphroditus gets very ill (Phil 2:25-27).
- News of Epaphroditus's illness reaches Philippi.
- Christians in Philippi are disappointed and concerned that Epaphroditus might now be a burden to Paul (Phil 2:26, 30).
- News of the Philippians' concerns comes to Paul and Epaphroditus.
- Meanwhile, Epaphroditus has improved sufficiently to travel home.
- Paul sends this letter with Epaphroditus, asking the Philippians to honor Epaphroditus for the sacrifice of his labors and to thank them for the gift they sent (Phil 2:28-30; 4:14-19).
- Paul writes also to prepare the way for future visits by Timothy and Paul himself (Phil 2:19, 24).

Content of Philippians

1. Paul's situation in Rome (Phil 1)
2. Godly humility, and personal matters (Phil 2)
3. Christian sanctification (Phil 3-4)

Points of interest in Philippians

- Bishops and deacons (Phil 1:1)
- Christian's death and life (Phil 1:20-30)
- "Kenosis" passage [*ekenosen heauton*, "he emptied himself"] (Phil 2:5-11)
- Warnings (Phil 3:2, 17-19)
- No rebukes (but note Phil 4:2)

Pastoral Epistles

These three letters were written to his "sons in the faith" Timothy and Titus. After his release from prison in Rome Paul was able to travel and establish more churches. He left Timothy in charge of the large church in Ephesus, with the duty of supervising other churches in the region. He left Titus in Crete with similar instructions. 1 Timothy and Titus were written during these last travels of Paul.

After the burning of Rome by Nero in A.D. 64 the Roman attitude toward the church changed. Nero continued to persecute the church in Rome until his death in A.D. 68. During those years Paul was arrested by the Romans and brought to Rome for his second imprisonment there. This time his confinement was much bleaker, and he expected to die as a martyr for Christ. During this second imprisonment in Rome he wrote 2 Timothy, asking his young helper to come to him before his death.

Critics generally do not accept the Pastoral Epistles as written by Paul. They assume Paul was in prison in Rome only once, and that the history behind these letters is impossible. They also notice the difference in doctrinal emphases and style from Paul's other writings. However, it is quite feasible that Paul was imprisoned twice; and the linguistic and theological differences can be explained by the fact that in these letters he is writing to trusted pastors, not to congregations. The tradition of the church strongly supports Pauline authorship as well.

1 Timothy

Background to 1 Timothy

Paul had left Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus, with instructions to establish other churches in the region. This letter was written to give him instructions and to encourage him (1 Tim 3; 4:13; esp. 3:14-15).

Timothy was to overcome his natural reticence and youthful reluctance (1 Tim 4:12, 15-16; 5:23).

In addition, there were doctrinal threats and false teachers to contend with, including a false idealism and superstition (Acts 20:28-30; 1 Tim 1:19; 4:1-3; 5:15; 6:20; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 4:14-15).

Content of 1 Timothy

1. Warnings against false teachers (1 Tim 1)
2. Women in the church (1 Tim 2, 5)
3. Qualifications of bishops [elders] and deacons (1 Tim 3)
4. Exhortations to be a good minister (1 Tim 4-6)

Points of interest in 1 Timothy

- Paul names names (1 Tim 1:20)
- Elder and deacon qualifications (1 Tim 3)
- Latter time apostasy (1 Tim 4:1-6)
- Ordination by the presbytery (1 Tim 4:14)
- “A little wine for your stomach’s sake” (1 Tim 5:23)
- “The love of money is the root of all evil” (1 Tim 6:10)
- Deity of Christ (1 Tim 6:13-16)

Titus

Unlike Timothy, who was half Jewish and whom Paul had circumcised, Titus was a Gentile, and Paul would not allow his circumcision (Gal 2:3; cf. Acts 16:1-3). Titus, as Luke, is not named in Acts; some speculate that he was Luke's brother. According to Paul's epistles, Titus was a trusted helper and companion of Paul.

Occasion for writing Titus

Paul had left Titus in Crete with instructions to organize the new churches there (Titus 1:5). Paul was concerned about false teachers there, who emphasized Jewish genealogies and other speculations (Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11). The culture in Crete was especially worldly and carnal; Paul wanted Titus to emphasize to the new Christians that they were to live godly lives and be a testimony for the Lord (Titus 1:8, 16; 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14).

In addition, Paul was preparing to send the lawyer Zenas and the preacher Apollos to Crete as guests (Titus 3:13). He wanted Titus to come and join him in Nicopolis when a replacement would arrive in Crete (Titus 3:12).

Content of Titus

1. Qualifications of elders (Titus 1)
2. The Christian in Society (Titus 2-3)

Points of interest in Titus

- Bishops equated with elders (Titus 1:5, 7)
- Two great doctrinal passages (Titus 2:11-14; 3:3-7)
- Rejection of heretics (Titus 3:10)

2 Timothy

Occasion for writing 2 Timothy

Paul is now in prison in Rome for the second time. Conditions are not as favorable as before (2 Tim 1:16-17; 4:6, 13, 16). Many were now forsaking Paul:

- All Asia (2 Tim 1:15; except Onesiphorus, 1:16-18)
- Demas (2 Tim 4:10)
- Alexander (4:14)
- All men at his first trial (2 Tim 4:16)

Others, who normally would comfort him, were not there:

- Crescens
- Titus
- Tychicus (2 Tim 4:10, 12)
- Erastus
- Trophimus (2 Tim 4:20)

Only Luke was still with him (2 Tim 4:11). Paul wants Timothy to come to him in Rome, bringing John Mark, and his cloak, books and parchments from Troas (2 Tim 4:9, 11, 13, 21).

Paul also is concerned that false teachers still are active in Ephesus, and need to be confronted (2 Tim 2:16-18; 3:13; 4:3-4).

Content of 2 Timothy

1. Paul's confidence in God (2 Tim 1)
2. Exhortations to a diligent ministry (2 Tim 2-3)

Paul's final testimony (2 Tim 4)

Points of interest in 2 Timothy

- Christian warfare (2 Tim 2:3-4)
- Last-day apostates (2 Tim 3:1-5)
- Inspiration of Scripture (2 Tim 3:15-17)
- Paul's faithfulness (2 Tim 4:6-8)