

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 44 – April 3-9

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalm 126-128

Luke 9-12

Readings in Class:

Philemon 1

Titus 1-3

Lament 1-5

Ezekiel 1-8

Introduction to Titus

This is another of Paul's Pastoral Epistles (along with 1 and 2 Timothy). Titus was one of the men that traveled with Paul occasionally. He is a gentile who became a Christian (see Galatians 2:1-3). Paul left Titus on Crete to continue to work they had started there, teaching and organizing the newly converted Christians.

One of Paul's main concerns is who is qualified to be an elder (a similar list to what he wrote to Timothy). This is especially important for Titus as his task on Crete was to set-up pastors in each town. Paul also warns him to watch out for false teachers.

He then goes into basic instructions for various vocations: old and young men, old and young women, servants/slaves, and citizens. Paul's reasoning for what is to be taught is so that the Word of God is not maligned and that people can't say anything bad about the Church. He also expects the people to devote themselves to doing good because God saved them in baptism (3:3-7 is a great description of the Gospel).

Finally, Paul also warns Titus away from divisive people and gives him instructions on where to meet up with Paul.

A brief summary of Titus

- Salutation and Greeting (1:1-4)
- Titus' task in Crete (1:1-16)
- What to teach Various Groups (2)
- Obligations of Citizens (3:1-2)
- Godly Conduct (3:3-11)
- Final Remarks (3:12-15)

Introduction to Philemon

Philemon is a curious little letter about a slave (Onesimus, which means 'useful' – see verse 11) who ran away from his master (Philemon), met Paul, and became a Christian. This letter was likely written at the same time as Colossians, while Paul was in prison (many of the same names are mentioned in both letters, including Onesimus).

Paul gives us a great example of Christian love, offering to take upon himself and pay back any debt that Onesimus might owe Philemon, just like Jesus took our sin upon himself, paying our debt. Through Jesus, we, as brothers and sisters in the faith, can be reconciled to each other.

From early church writings, we know that Onesimus became a Bishop in Ephesus. He is also believed to have been arrested in Rome, tortured, and beaten to death near the end of the first century. It is in Ephesus that Paul's letters were collected and put in the canon of Scripture. As bishop, Onesimus was probably a major part of this, which is perhaps why this little letter about him got included.

A brief summary of Philemon

- Greetings (1-3)
- Thanksgiving and Prayer (4-7)
- Plea for Onesimus (8-21)
- Conclusion (22-25)