

Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the New Testament
Living the Message 2021-2022
March 2022 Study Guide for Participants and Facilitators

February Question:

How Did Paul's Legacy Continue? *Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*

[Click here to watch the video.](#)

Overview

In last month's topic and presentation we noted the massive importance of the work, witness, and preaching of the Apostle Paul in the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ and within his work what ended up being a gigantic contribution to the New Testament of the Christian Bible with his letters to the early churches and connections. We noted the seven letters in the New Testament which are nearly undeniably composed by Paul himself (Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1st Thessalonians, and Philemon) and how they further shaped and informed the understanding of the revelation of God in Jesus.

This month we focus on the six other letters attributed to Paul in the New Testament (Ephesians, Colossians, 2nd Thessalonians, 1st and 2nd Timothy, and Titus), and how they are at best doubtfully written by Paul himself. We see in these letters perhaps how Paul's legacy continued, and how the early Christian church continued to hone language and address new challenges and circumstances while at the same time remaining faithful and encouraging one another in the message of the gospel.

Likely written by students, co-workers, or other associates or leaders who wished to capitalize on Paul's notoriety and support his legacy, the letters show departures from Paul in grammatical style and language and in their understanding of such issues as the return of Christ and new questions of order and practice within the churches, households, and communities of the early church. While these letters have helped shape the theology and practice of the church in some wonderful ways, they have also stoked fires of division in practice and proclamation.

Questions

1. One of the main motivations of the letters attributed to Paul, but likely not written by Paul, was to address new and/or unexpected circumstances within specific communities. Can you think of ways faithful Christian communities continue this same work today? In what ways have you witnessed new realities of life in community causing the church to adjust or reconsider language or practice? How have the churches or faith communities you've been a part of sought to update and adjust? Did it all work out? Was any of it problematic or helpful? Did everyone agree?
2. Today we might think it disingenuous or misleading to write under another person's name. Yet, assuming the well-meaning intentions of the writers of these letters (likely students of Paul trying to give good counsel in his absence, perhaps wanting to stay protected and safe from persecution, and/or a way of giving honor and affirmation of Paul's ministry), how can we see it in a faithful light? Are there

ways we “name-drop” or otherwise note and give credit to teachers, preachers, mentors, and leaders in our further understanding of life and faith?

3. Two key motifs in the deuterio-Pauline letters are encouragement amid suffering or persecution and wrestling with the delay of Christ’s return. Read [2 Thessalonians chapter 1](#), and [2:13-17](#). What stands out to you? What might give hope? What might be difficult to bear still? How might it still give us words to consider today?
4. Especially regarding the roles of different genders within the church, many Christians still cite passages from these letters as universal standards of Christian community. (For example, preventing women from leadership roles. See [1 Timothy 2:9-15](#)). What do you think about this? How would you explain the differences in Christian communities in how they read and conceive of the scripture? How does knowing the circumstances of these letters, who likely composed them, and the time and culture in which they were written help in your interpretation?

Going Deeper into the Word with Pastor Lose - the Body of Christ

1. Read the passage from 1st Corinthians where Paul talks about the Body of Christ ([12:12, 14-20, 27](#)). What words and images stick out to you? What adjectives would you use to describe Paul’s words to the Corinthians? Jot them down, then read the passage from Ephesians ([4:11-16](#)) and do the same. How do your lists compare? What similarities do you notice, what differences? What development of thought do you sense in the years between when these passages were written?
2. Now read the second passage from Ephesians ([5:21-33](#)) and do the same, jotting down your impressions and the adjectives and other words that come to mind. How does the use of body imagery compare to that in the Letter to the Corinthians? How does it compare with Paul’s words in Galatians ([3:23-28](#)).
3. As you compare these various passages from Paul and those who wrote in his name later, what do you think may have been going on in the Church that prompted these shifts in imagery and use? How does knowing these passages were written by a later author at a different time in the church’s history affect how you read them, interpret them, and apply them? Does it affect your sense of the “authority” of these passages? If so, how. If not, why?

Closing Prayer

Gracious God, we give thanks for the gospel of Christ passed down through the ages. As your people made holy by your grace alone, give us wisdom to continue to discern your will, and wrestle with how we will proclaim and practice the truth of your reign here and now, in Jesus’ name. Amen.