

TITUS AND PHILEMON

Introduction: Because of their brevity Titus and Philemon have been combined. While part of different groupings of scripture (i.e. Titus is a "pastoral epistle" and Philemon is a "prison epistle"), both are written to godly men, offering valuable instruction.

Name — Both books are named for the individuals who received them. (i.e. Titus and Philemon)

Author — Paul authored both books. (Titus 1:1; Philemon 1:1)

Purpose

A. Titus —

1. Paul wrote this letter:
 - a. To remind Titus to complete the needed organizational matters in the church on the island of Crete.
 - b. To encourage him to teach correct doctrine and refute false teachers.

B. Philemon — Paul wrote this personal letter to his friend Philemon to intercede for the slave Onesimus.

I. Background of the books.

A. Titus

1. Titus was a trusted and valued associate of Paul.
 - a. Strangely, however, he is not mentioned in Acts.
 - b. What we know of Titus is his connection with Paul's works.
2. Titus was a Greek.
 - a. He evidently was converted through Paul's preaching. (Titus 1:4)
 - b. Paul did not demand that Titus be circumcised. (Galatians 2:3)
 - c. Apparently Paul wanted to make a point to the "Judaizers" that circumcision was not a requirement for conversion to Christ. (Galatians 2:4-5)
3. Between the writing of his letters to the Corinthians, Paul sent Titus to work with the church at Corinth. (cf. II Corinthians 8:16-24)
4. Upon release from his first imprisonment in Rome, Paul took Titus with him to Crete and left him there to oversee the work. (Titus 1:5)
 - a. Crete is a large island in the Mediterranean.
 - b. The church may have been established there through Jewish converts on Pentecost. (Acts 2:11)
 - c. Titus was there to appoint elders and correct certain problems.
 - d. Paul was evidently at Nicopolis and eager for Titus to join him after finishing his work. (Titus 3:12)
5. One of the pastoral epistles, Paul wrote this letter in AD 63 from Ephesus.

B. Philemon

1. The letter to Philemon was one of the four prison epistles (along with Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians) written during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome.
2. Philemon was apparently written concurrently with Colossians.
 - a. Philemon evidently lived in Colossae.
 - b. Paul sent Tychicus to accompany Onesimus and deliver the letters. (Colossians 4:7-9)
 - c. Colossians dealt with church-wide issues; Philemon addresses a personal problem.
3. To understand Philemon, one must have some understanding of slavery in the Roman Empire.
 - a. It is estimated that one third of one-half of the population of the Empire in the first century consisted of slaves.

- b. Slavery was particularly harsh in that culture.
 - [1] Slaves were viewed as "living tools."
 - [2] Their life, death, and treatment were all at the discretion of their master.
 - [3] Slaves were acquired through battle conquest, birth, indebtedness, etc.
- c. In New Testament times, some civil protection began to be afforded slaves. However, it was still a cruel and awful life-style.
- 4. Onesimus was Philemon's slave. (Philemon 18-19)
 - a. He had run away to Rome.
 - b. What's more, he had taken stolen property.
- 5. Somehow Onesimus came in contact with Paul and was converted. (Philemon 10)
 - a. Upon his conversion, Onesimus assisted Paul in his ministry. (Philemon 11-13)
 - b. Knowing the moral obligation to square things with Philemon, Paul sent Onesimus back with a promise and a request. (Philemon 12-14)

II. The main messages of the books.

A. Titus

1. The main message of this letter was to provide Titus instruction and encouragement in fulfilling his ministry at Crete.
2. "These, then, are the things you should teach. Encourage and rebuke with all authority. Do not let anyone despise you." (Titus 2:15)

B. Philemon

1. The main message of Philemon was to encourage Philemon to receive, forgive and even release Onesimus.
2. "So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me." (Philemon 17)

III. Outline of the books.

A. Titus

1. Introduction (Titus 1:1-4)
2. Paul reminds Titus of the tasks he needs to complete while at Crete. (Titus 1:5)
3. The apostle reminds him of the requirements for men who would be appointed as elders. (Titus 1:6-9)
4. Paul warns him about false teachers who would oppose him. (Titus 1:10-16)
5. Paul offers instruction for teaching specific groups, including:
 - a. Aged men (Titus 2:1-2)
 - b. Aged women. (Titus 2:3)
 - c. Young women. (Titus 2:4-5)
 - d. Young men. (Titus 2:6-8)
 - e. Slaves. (Titus 2:9-10)
6. The apostle writes of the grace of God which is the basis of morality. (Titus 2:11-15)
7. Paul gives instruction about proper behavior for all believers (Titus 3:1-7) and condemns those who live otherwise. (Titus 3:8-11)
8. Final remarks. (Titus 3:12-15)

B. Philemon

1. Paul's greetings to Philemon. (Philemon 1-3)
2. The apostle expresses gratitude for Philemon's godly character. (Philemon 4-7)
3. Paul offers his plea for Onesimus. (Philemon 8-21)
4. He speaks of his desire to visit Philemon soon. (Philemon 22)
5. Closing greetings. (Philemon 23-25)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. The preacher's life. (Titus 2:7-8)

1. Paul tells Titus that the quality of his life must confirm his teaching. (2:7)
2. Specifically, Paul outlined these responsibilities:
 - a. Do what is good. (v. 7)
 - b. In teaching, show integrity. (v. 7)
 - c. Have "soundness of speech." (v. 8)
 - d. Speak what "cannot be condemned." (v. 8)
3. This model and instruction are timeless.

B. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised but not Titus?

1. Paul refused to have Titus circumcised to appease Judaizing teachers. (Galatians 2:1-3)
2. He circumcised Timothy when the young man became part of his missionary team. (Acts 16:3)
3. There is no inconsistency in Paul's actions.
 - a. Timothy was not circumcised to appease false teachers but to make him a more effective minister to the Jews.
 - b. If Titus had been circumcised, it would have compromised the integrity of the gospel.

C. The ministry of reconciliation.

1. Quick and through reconciliation between Christians is a key theme in scripture. (II Corinthians 5:17-20; Matthew 5:9; 23, 24; 18:15; John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:31-32)
2. The letter to Philemon provides a wonderful model of practical, relevant, Christ-centered reconciliation. That reconciliation involves:
 - a. Prayer (v. 4-6)
 - b. Politeness (v. 8-9)
 - c. Privacy (v. 10-14)
 - d. Personal
 - e. Partnership (v. 17-19)
3. The key to reconciliation is found in "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." (Ephesians 4:31-32)