

Bible-Reading Coach Podcast Transcript

Week 49: Philippians, Colossians, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, *Paul Teaches, Rebukes and Encourages*

Welcome to Week 49 of the Bible reading coach podcast. My name is Karl Vaters and I'm here to help you read through the Bible in 52 weeks.

All right. This week, we're going to read through six books, which ties week 39. For the most books we're reading a week, but the record won't last long, because when we get to week 51, we're going to read seven books there. Okay, as we mentioned last week, it's not because we're reading more, it's because the books are getting shorter. This week, all six books were written by the Apostle Paul again, the first four were written to churches in Philippi, Colossi and Thessalonica. And the final two were written to Timothy who was pastoring a church that Paul had planted in Ephesus, and it left Timothy behind as the pastor.

The books of First and Second Timothy are also the first to have what are called Three pastoral epistles, the last one being Titus, which we'll read next week. And they are the primary sources that pastors go to about how to be a pastor in a church first and second, Timothy and Titus. All right, let's start with the first book we'll be reading this week, which is Philippians. Philippians, was written to the Christians in the city of Philippi, which was a city in Greece, where Paul had planted a church, he wrote this letter to them from prison, probably he was in prison in Rome. And we know this because he says so in the letter, we also know this, because one of the reasons he sends the letter, which he mentioned in the letter, was to thank the Philippians for the gift that they had sent him after they heard that he had been sent to prison, okay. He also writes them about standing firm in their own time of persecution in chapter one, and the importance of unity in the church and warnings about false teachers.

So let's take a look at this, Philippians, beginning with chapter one. He begins with thanking them and thanking God. And I want you to note when you begin reading the book of Philippians, know Paul's attitude. His attitude is really interesting. And it's the opposite of what most of our attitudes, including mine would probably be. Paul never gets upset about being sent to prison. In fact, here, the big the main word in chapter one is rejoice, like rejoice in this change what rejoice in this great opportunity, I had to spread the Gospel by being sent to prison. It's just so strange to us. What does get Paul mad is not being sent to prison. What gets Paul mad is when Christians don't act like Christians. And that's a balance that we need to learn better, I think. So he gives thanks to them. He gives thanks to God and Philippians chapter one.

In chapter two, he talks about the importance of humility, using Jesus as the example that Jesus, Jesus was and is God. And he laid aside the power of being God in order to come and be on earth as a human being. He never gave up being God, He was God when He was on earth, he always will be God. But he gave up a lot of the power of being God to walk among us humbly. And just as Jesus gave up his power, in order to walk humbly among us, so we need to be full of humility as well. He then ends the chapter talking about the fact that he's going to send Timothy to them, and maybe Epaphroditus to them. And let me pause here for a moment to say this.

It may be tempting, as we're reading through the letters that Paul wrote, especially to want to skip past this many times, that he talks about things that were going on at the time, I'm

going to send Peter to you, could you please send me your coat back, send me my coat, those kinds of things. Don't skip over those parts, don't shortchange them. They give us, I think, an essential feel that these letters were sent by real people to real people from real places to real places, at real times in history. And these travel moments, these greetings of people are a part of what gives us that feel, that really helped us anchor the truths of the Bible into time and space, it's really important for us to pay attention to that.

We'll then move to Philippians chapter three, where again, the apostle Paul addresses what we've already recognized is the singular big, theological issue of the early church. It's framed as circumcision in Paul's writings. But the issue for us today as for our understanding is the question was, do you have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian? And Paul says, Absolutely not. In fact, in chapter three of Philippians, he talks about, he basically says this, if you have to become a Jew, in order to become a Christian, let me tell you about my life. And he basically says, I was as Jewish as anybody who's ever lived, he, in an embarrassing way, he says, I'm kind of embarrassed by saying this, but boy, if anybody ever qualified to be saved by God because of their Jewishness, I'm first in line I was more Jewish than anybody else. And then he says that in order to tell them, but even me as Jewish as I am, I'm not saved by being Jewish. I'm not saved by my birth. I'm not saved by observing the law. I'm saved by God's grace, and that's the same for everybody. So pay attention to that and Philippians three.

And then the book of Philippians closes out a chapter for, as Paul usually does, by greeting his friends, by pleading with some church members, even by name to please get along better, and he thanks them for their generosity, well then move to the book of Colossians. It's another letter written from Paul, from prison. In fact, there are several books that are together called the prison epistles. Ephesians and Philippians, which we've already covered. Colossians and then Philemon, which we'll read next week, are called the prison epistles because they were sent from prison by Paul. Colossae, the town this was sent to, was a town in modern day Turkey, where Paul had planted a church.

So let's walk through the four chapters of Colossians. He begins in chapter one, again, the way he begins most of his books by thanking them. And by praising God, specifically, in this chapter, he talks about the glory of Jesus and the supremacy of Jesus. It's easy to read these kind of well, that's just the way they opened letters that day. And in some ways, yes, by putting the name of the sender first, rather than at the end, which is a better way than the way we do it. But this idea of opening it with thanksgiving, and thankfulness and appreciation for the letter recipient, was not a typical way that letters were written. And if this graciousness is almost unique to the New Testament, in ancient literature, it's part of the change of heart that Christ causes among us, that we are really grateful to him and that we're really grateful to other Christians. This is really a new thing that was happening in the world at the time.

We then moved to Colossians chapter two, where he again gets to the first theological debate of the early church, he talks about circumcision. And circumcision, as we've talked about already, it's not about rituals. It's about freedom, and Jesus, which he addresses here, even addresses the way we approach food, the way we approach drink, that even Sabbath is different now because of Jesus. And he does so by saying that the Old Testament cleanliness regulations are really a shadow of Jesus who was to come. And now that Jesus is here, we don't need to worry about following that shadow anymore.

This is one of the places where Christians study to understand, this is why we don't need to follow Old Testament food regulations. And we don't need to follow Old Testament cleanliness regulations. But we still do need to follow the Old Testament moral codes. This is one of the places where we get that idea from, it's not just haphazard.

We'll then move to Colossians chapter three, where he talks about holy living. Notice, we get to Colossians three, that the rules that were to follow as Christians have a different purpose than the rules did in the Old Testament. We do not follow these rules in order to be made right with God. Following rules does not make us right with God now, never did make us right with God before. We follow the rules because of what Jesus has done. And because, now that we've come by faith in Christ, we want to be followers of Jesus and following Jesus means acting like Jesus act, and he was pure. So we honor him by following Christ's godly example.

Notice in chapter three of words, like therefore, and since then, are repeated regularly, because he's lining it up as because of what Jesus has done. Therefore, we behave this way. Because Jesus did this. Since he did that, then we now behaved this way. So the order matters here. It's salvation first than holy living, not the other way around. And then Colossians closes in chapter four, again, with the final greetings that we're so used to with Paul where he greets friends by name, he says he's going to send a greeting from Aristarchus, which is really interesting in chapter four, verse 10. Someone who is a prisoner with him, and since he only mentions Aristarchus by first name and mentions him specifically here, we assume that Aristarchus was probably a Colossian Christian who was in prison with Paul.

There's also an interesting historical note at the end of this chapter, chapter four, verse 16. He, Paul, had also sent a letter to the town of Laodicea, which was very near Colossae. And so he tells them, after you read this letter, make sure it gets to the church and layer to see it and make sure that you read the letter that I sent to the church in Laodicea. We'll see more from Laodicea in Revelation. And that church didn't do well in the long term. But this letter to Laodicea was probably sent at the same time that the letter to Colossae was sent. We don't have that letter to Laodicea. We don't know what was in it. But there's a reference to it at the end of Colossians.

We'll then move to the book of Thessalonians. Thessalonica was a huge port city, and most of the converts in Thessalonica had been Gentiles. And Paul had to leave Thessalonica abruptly; we read about that in Acts chapter 17, because a riot had broken out over his sharing the gospel. So these brand new Christians who had come out of paganism, not out of Judaism had a little or no Old Testament background. So they were struggling. What does it mean to move from paganism to Christianity? It's a very different path than moving from Judaism into Christianity.

They had no understanding of a single god of the 10 commandments of the old covenants and how they related to the new covenant of Christ being a messiah. What does all that mean? They had virtually no understanding. And Paul had to leave so quickly that they were really left confused about what to do next. So Paul writes this letter to help them with that. We read through that. In this way, he starts after a short reading, and he tells them this in chapter two, verse one, our visit was not a failure. Right? Why would, why would they assume it was a failure? Because he left so quickly, and he left them without the full teaching that he used, they left them with, but he said, This is not a failure. Why did he say that?

Well, because it probably felt like a failure to them. So that's why and now what had happened was because he left so quickly and didn't have a chance to explain everything thoroughly through them. Just like in many other places, deceitful people had come in behind Paul had tried to undermine him. And they were trying to tell the people in Thessalonica that Paul was a huckster. And so he reminds them how honestly he lived when he was among them, how truthfully he lived when he was among them, how generously he lived when he was among them, and he reminds them, I'm going to come back, I'm going to come back as soon as I possibly can. It was not a failure, we started it, we may not have done as much as we normally do, but keep faithful to this.

And he especially is thankful because Timothy had told him how faithful the vessel and icons were being how strongly they were trying to hold on to this new faith. And speaking of Timothy will then conclude our reading this week with the books of First and Second Timothy, two different letters, written to Timothy at two different times. Timothy was one of Paul's most faithful companions and co-workers. He was a younger man. He had been trained by Paul and Paul relied upon Timothy a lot. In fact Timothy is mentioned in the first verses of all four books of Paul that we've read so far. He's mentioned as and now as we start the pastoral epistles, First and Second Timothy and Titus is mentioned in all three of them as well.

So again, we are starting the books that are called the pastoral epistles first and second, Timothy and Titus. These books are where pastors get most of our ideas about how to lead churches. So pay attention to that, as you read for Second Timothy, and then Titus next week. These are written to a pastor about how to pastor churches. And as you read it, recognize that that's what it's about starts in First Timothy, chapter one, with after two quick verses a greeting, he jumps immediately in, okay, here's how you do have false teachers, because obviously, Timothy pastoring in Ephesus right now, was dealing with that a lot. And then just as quickly, he jumps again, to how grateful Paul is. And Paul says, I'm so grateful to God because He saves even the worst of sinners. And in chapter one, verse 15, he in fact, says, I was the worst of sinners. And when you take a look at Paul's history, persecuting and killing Christians, he's not just saying it to be humble, he's doing it because he really regrets what he did before he came to know Christ.

We then go to First Timothy, chapters two through five, where he talks to Timothy about how to be a better pastor. Timothy was already a good pastor, but how to be even better. And he gives several key teachings that we pastors still study today about how to pastor church as well. He teaches about worship, about the character traits of pastors, how to stay true to the Gospel, even how to treat widows and elders. Well, Timothy, who was a young pastor, how do you lead as a young pastor? How do you lead older Christians? And he talks about that as well. These are passages that are taught a lot, especially to young pastors in seminary, who are about to go into churches, where they may be one of the youngest people in the church that will be leading the church filled with older saints, we draw a lot of wisdom from First Timothy two through five on how to do that.

We then go to First Timothy six and close out this particular book, where Paul has a few verses about how to be careful to avoid the love of money. This is something that we need to be constantly on our guard about. There have been and always will be people who will use the position of authority in the church in order to get rich. That happens to 0.01% of pastors, because every pastor I've ever met, not one of them went into the pastor to get rich because if

they were, they're crazy, or they're cheaters. So he said, and this is on purpose. Do not go into the pastor because you love money. In fact, if you love money, do not become a pastor, he tells him. And then he gives what's called the pastoral charge, about how to become a pastor and his charge and his encouragement to Timothy as a pastor.

And then we'll finish up the week with Second Timothy. Second Timothy is a separate letter written a little bit later than First Timothy. Still from Paul, still to Timothy, Timothy is still pastoring in Ephesus and he continues his pastoral instruction to stay faithful even as times get hard. And then he ends it with another pastoral charge.

So as we finish up this week, why should you care about the pastoral epistles, especially these last two books, if you're not a pastor? Here's why. First of all, by reading what the Bible says pastors are supposed to do, it helps you know what to look for in pastoral leadership, if you are looking for a new church right? Now, for those of you who are from my home church, cornerstone, I hope you're not looking for a new church, although you could listen to this. And watch this years later, and be looking for a new church. If you're ever looking for a new church. The What are you looking for in a pastor read first and second Timothy and Titus, and it will give you an idea of what a biblical pastor should behave like, Okay, so that's one reason we want to read it.

Secondly, it's harder for you to be deceived by false teachers, if you read what good pastors are supposed to act like and, and are supposed to teach like, right, this gives you an idea of what true pastoring looks like, you will be less likely to be deceived by false teachers. And then finally, it gives you an idea of what to pray for for your pastor, because it'll give you just that smallest little hint of how heavy the burden of pastoring can be. So you're gonna get a lot out of this week. I know, these are passages that are taught on a lot and that every pastor spent a lot of time studying in order to do our job better in order to fulfill our calling. Better to bless you. I hope you get a lot out of it this week, and we'll see you next week.

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