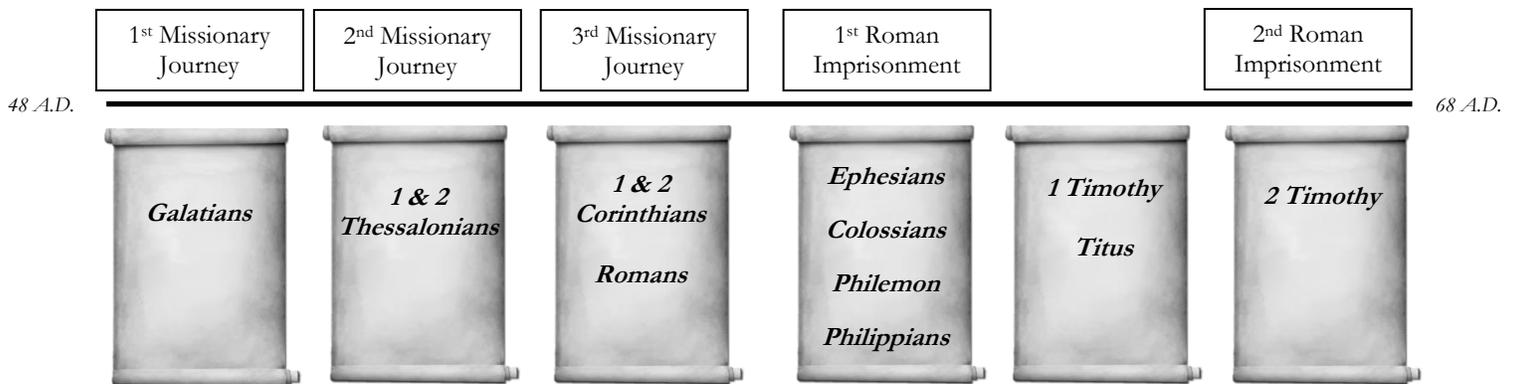


Reading Through the New Testament

Paul's Epistles to the Church



The gospel spread, as a result of Paul's missionary endeavors, and churches were formed in cities all across the Roman Empire. These new believers needed instruction so they might be grounded in biblical doctrine, learning how followers of Christ are to live out their faith. In the midst of opposition, they needed encouragement to press on and remain steadfast in the Lord. Paul wrote letters to accomplish these goals, and the Lord continues to speak to Christians today through his epistles.



I. Reading Paul's Letters

- Every part of Scripture is important, but if we want to learn about God's plan for the Church, the B_____ of C_____, this is the section where we need to turn. (Ephesians 3:4-5)
- Paul's letters are not arranged in the Bible according to chronological order (i.e. the order in which they were written), but according to l_____.
- The apostle did not set out to write a series of theological textbooks, but was addressing real congregations and the issues they were facing. What kinds of problems do you suppose came up in the early church? Do churches today deal with the same sorts of concerns?
- Missionaries today can communicate easily from most foreign lands. Even in Africa they are often able to send and receive email. Letters can be sent internationally through the mail. Facebook and Skype bring people from around the world together. But sending a letter in first century Rome took a little more effort...

- Writing materials...
- Postal Carrier...(see Rom. 16:1; Col. 4:7)
- Secretary... (see Rom. 16:22)
- Making copies... (see Colossians 4:16; 1 Thess. 5:27)
- Authenticity... (see 2 Thess. 2:2)

5. What do we mean when we talk about prison epistles? What do we mean by the pastoral epistles?

6. Most of Paul's letters follow a similar basic outline:

- Greeting
- Doctrine
- Application
- Closing

6. Did early Christians regard the letters of Paul as divinely inspired, on the same level as the Old Testament Scriptures? (see 2 Peter 3:15-16)

7. Do you think Paul wrote other letters, that are not recorded in Scripture? (Colossians 4:16)

8. Major Themes in Paul's Letters...

Romans: Justification by faith (Romans 1:16)

1 Corinthians: Church conflict and divisions (1 Corinthians 1:10-11)

2 Corinthians: The message of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:20)

Galatians: Legalism and our freedom in Christ (Galatians 3:1-2)

Ephesians: The Church, the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Philippians: Joy in all our circumstances (Philippians 2:17-18)

Colossians: The supremacy of Christ (Colossians 1:16)

1 & 2 Thessalonians: The end times (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2)

1 Timothy: Godly leadership in the face of opposition (1 Timothy 4:12)

2 Timothy: Finishing the race (2 Timothy 4:7)

Titus: Doing good towards all people (Titus 2:14)

Philemon: Forgiveness and equality in Christ (Philemon 15-16)