

OCTOBER 16

Today you begin 1 Timothy, the fifteenth book of the New Testament. It gives us a look into the church and the lives of two disciples, after the history recorded in the book of Acts. In other words, find something sweet with which to celebrate.

Jeremiah 28-29

Finally some action and adventure in Jeremiah; and the further we go, the more action there will be.

So, last chapter, God told Jeremiah to make a yoke, put it on his neck and then tell the nations and King Zedekiah, that in spite of what they might have heard about instability in Babylon, God was requiring all nations to submit to Nebuchadnezzar.

Jeremiah 28

Vs. 1-4 Hananiah was about to get into real trouble.

V. 1 Notice that the time is given very exactly.

Vs. 5-11 This false prophecy was given in Jeremiah's presence, in public, and Jeremiah was made to look like a fool by this smooth talking, dynamic preacher.

It is interesting to me that Jeremiah's only retaliation was the word God gave him. Even after the yoke was smashed, Jeremiah didn't lose his mind. This speaks for his submission to God and to his maturity. It brought to mind that both Jesus and the Holy Spirit only spoke on the Father's authority, and then, they only spoke what they heard. As a disciple the Lord is impressing me with this. People don't need to hear my take on life; they need to hear the Lord. I should only say what He wants me to say, since I'm under His authority.

Vs. 12-17 You might wonder why God even allowed Hananiah to speak, but the people wanted to believe a lie. They could always have believed Jeremiah. Notice in this section the occurrences of *you*. God was not happy with Hananiah.

V. 17 The people heard of this prophecy against Hananiah. Where Hananiah projected two years for his prophecy, it didn't take God two months to fulfill his word on Hananiah.

I wonder if anyone took this to heart.

Jeremiah 29

This is a very interesting chapter. Jeremiah sent a letter to the exiles in Babylon. Just think of that. Nebuchadnezzar allowed that. The people were organized in Babylon. By this time Daniel had been in Babylon about 10 years. For the past seven years, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah have been top government officials. Nebuchadnezzar had already developed a respect for Yahweh, bowing to worship Him. It is possible that Daniel 3 had already occurred. If so, Nebuchadnezzar had worshipped Him again, but I'm guessing, by this chapter, that that event was still in the near future. Anyway, that is all to explain why this communication would have been possible. God had already made a safe place for His people in Babylon.

Vs. 1-14 These orders by God to the exiles give a lot of information and hope.

V. 3 Notice Elasah the son of Shaphan. Shaphan was one of the officials who found the only existent copy of the Bible during the early years of Josiah. His heritage can be seen by looking at "The Line of Shaphan," Bible Knowledge Commentary-OT, p. 1164.

This was a very godly man and three of his four sons were also godly.

Vs. 15-23 There are lots of observations to be made here.

V. 15 God would take care of these prophets. The people already had false prophets in Babylon, so God was going to raise up Ezekiel in the fifth year of the taking of Jehoiachin. Then they would know that a real prophet was among them. Since these prophets were prophesying against Nebuchadnezzar, both Neb and Daniel would have been concerned about their words, though for different reasons.

V. 22 This is why I think that Daniel 3 hadn't happened yet, but I don't know because I wasn't there. Here is my thinking. When you see Neb's arrogance against Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, I'm guessing it is because he had already roasted these two "prophets" and Yahweh did nothing. God was setting up Nebuchadnezzar for a shock that would protect the Jews throughout his entire empire and become the top of the world's evening news for several months.

Vs. 24-32 If you understand what is happening here, there is a second letter Jeremiah/God is sending back to Babylon. Some guy name Shemaiah heard the first letter in Babylon and got mad and sent a letter to Jerusalem saying they should rebuke Jeremiah. So God sends a letter back to the exiles in Babylon saying not to listen to Shemaiah, and that Shemaiah would get whammied. Interestingly, in contrast to the heritage of Shaphan, Shemaiah will have no descendants.

It might be hard for us to identify with this conflict and the false prophets, but we live with it too. Politicians do this all the time, saying things are fine with Fanny Mae and Freddy Mac when they were totally bad. Now we are paying the price for decades of abuse. Yet we're not that aware of political things. On the spiritual side of life we need to be very aware. Not only are there spiritual cults and counterfeits, we need to make sure, as we work in the harvest, that we are giving the whole counsel of God and not just what is easy for us to say. The false prophets in Jeremiah's day were "positive" and likeable and gave the people hope. You can see how it would be a lot more fun to give people that message than the one Jeremiah was giving. Our message is not just about getting one's life or family together and hanging out with God. It is also about a coming kingdom and a King. It is about judgment and the need to turn to God. It is about being forgiven or having to face God's wrath for eternity. Those are just the facts.

John 3:36 *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.*

1 Timothy 1

1 & 2 Timothy and Titus are called the *pastoral epistles*, because they were written to two pastors, Timothy and Titus. These three letters were written after Paul was released from Rome after the history we find at the end of Acts. Apparently Paul was released after his house arrest in Rome and hearing in front of Nero. Then for perhaps five years he was free. Then the persecutions of Nero heated up and Paul was captured and for a second time was imprisoned in Rome. That is where we find Paul in 2 Timothy. While the first imprisonment was very civil and Paul was under house arrest in a nice apartment, the second time he was in jail, he was in a deep, dark, dank Roman dungeon awaiting judgment and death in 2 Timothy, which was his last letter.

In 1 Timothy we find Paul still free and traveling urgently to the churches in Macedonia. He left Timothy in Ephesus to repair whatever had happened there. Now he was sending Timothy a letter with instructions. Although 1 Timothy and Titus are similar in the instructions on choosing elders and setting up order in the church, it is alarming that Timothy was having to do this in a well-established church like Ephesus. What awaited Timothy there was stress and, it looks like, having to rebuild the leadership structure in the church. In Acts 20, Ephesus seemed to be pretty strong. Here it looks like major problems had torn the church apart. As usual, as a result of this disaster, we get some great teaching. It is also very possible that the Roman persecutions under Nero were beginning to heat up and had resulted in churches being persecuted and losing their leaders. In 2 Timothy, Paul appears to be weeks before his death. Paul died in 67 A.D., executed by Nero. Three years later the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, fulfilling Jesus'

pronouncement of judgment on that generation of Israel He had spoken to, who had rejected Him.

Although 1 Timothy and Titus cover some of the same ground regarding church structure, the letters to Timothy are much more personal in tone, pointing to the unique relationship Paul had with this disciple. Rebuilding Ephesus is in the forefront of Paul's letters to Timothy, yet they are also very much about Paul building into Timothy. Hardly anything Paul says is just for teaching or guiding the church. Everything Paul says seems to have some message to Timothy to strengthen him and clear his vision for the task of making disciples, who will make disciples, who will make disciples long after Paul is gone.

V. 1 This is an unusual greeting for Paul, unique for Timothy. What is Paul directing Timothy's attention to? *God our Savior* is unique, as is *Christ Jesus our hope*. Notice how there is a focus on the gospel and the harvest right from the first verse. This would be the emphasis of Timothy's work, and it was something Ephesus had lost.

V. 2 Paul apparently led Timothy to Christ. This is not Paul's usual "grace to you and peace" benediction. Timothy needs all of these in his fight.

Vs. 3-4 You notice the urgency in this letter immediately. We'll see that the confusing influence that tore this church apart had a very Jewish bent to it.

V. 4 The RSV says, *the divine training that is in faith*. There is a pattern of life, of building and working forward in the harvest that is in view here. There is a training that takes place every day in following Christ in the harvest.

Vs. 5-7 You could begin v. 5 with "whereas" and end the verse with a comma, not a period.

You see, once again, it was legalistic, hard, conservative Jewish teaching that was creating difficulties. We'll see this clearly in chapter 4.

Vs. 8-11 The point here is that Christians are to be focused on Christ and the harvest, not on the law. The law focuses on condemnation; grace focuses on Christ, forgiveness and His coming. This focus on the law had probably stopped the church from being salt and light, and it may have also blown the leadership of the church apart through judging people according to the law.

Vs. 12-17 Aren't we glad this happened in Ephesus, so we would have this testimony and look into Paul's walk with Christ? Maybe the Lord allows stuff like this in our lives for the same purpose.

Vs. 12-13 I sense the burden and weight of this on Paul.

V. 14 For ministry, I believe that Paul received a supernatural equipping and gifting of faith and of love in Christ. I think this working of the Spirit turned this scrawny Jewish boy into Captain America, I mean Captain Gospel.

V. 15-17 Even near the end of his life, Paul never forgot what he had been and how/why God had saved and equipped him. It wasn't for himself, but for Christ, for others, for the harvest.

Vs. 18-20 Paul is charging Timothy to wage war. Paul was in the battle and Timothy was to stay in the battle. He was to remember and be inspired by what God had said about him.

V. 20 Hymenaeus gets mentioned in 2 Timothy. False teachers were on the rise. "Handing over" these men was to exclude them from the safety and protection of the church and its fellowship.

These words to Timothy are some of the most complete on keeping the church focused on the harvest and making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples. The harvest and the making of disciples is a part of everything Paul is saying in these letters. If the church falls, so does the commission we were entrusted with.

Psalm 86

As you read the psalm, look for words to underline, especially *O Lord, you, and your*. It gives the psalm an interesting emphasis as you read.

Vs. 1-7 As we have seen in David, the desperation of his life was used by God to make him the man he was. David cried out and sought no other hope but in God. Through all of these experiences, he saw over and over that God was loving, faithful and mighty to save.

Vs. 8-10 In keeping with His promise to Abraham and His faithfulness to Israel, not only was God great above all others, but all nations were destined to worship Him.

Vs. 11-13 These are what we always see expressed by David. He loved God and His truth. He promised to praise God, and he rested in God's *steadfast love*. Verse 11 is interesting and sounds like this "uniting" was bringing peace and understanding to his heart.

Vs. 14-17 Though David had powerful enemies, he was busy looking to the Lord in hope, remembering how God had constantly helped and saved him.

Proverbs 25:17

Amen.