



*Becoming Fully Devoted Followers
by Studying the Followers Before Us*

WEEK 49

TIMOTHY AND TITUS

DECEMBER 3-7, 2007

DAY	<i>THROUGH THE BIBLE</i>	<i>ABBREVIATED STUDY</i>
Monday	Galatians, Psalm 91	Acts 16:1-5, 2 Tim 1:1-5, Psalm 91
Tuesday	Ephesians, Psalm 92	1 Timothy 1:1-11, Psalm 92
Wednesday	Philippians, Psalm 93	1 Tim 4:6-16, 2 Tim 1:6-12, Ps 93
Thursday	Colossians, Psalm 94	Galatians 2:1-10, Psalm 94
Friday	1 Thess 1-3, Psalm 95	Titus 2:1-15, Psalm 95

READ

Acts 16:1-5

2 Timothy 1:1-5

Psalm 91

REFLECT

Timothy and Titus appear in the New Testament as two trusted assistants of Paul, whom he was able to use in positions of important support for his apostolic ministry. We hear more about Timothy, who gets included in the book of Acts as well as in a number of Paul's letters. The New Testament books of 1-2 Timothy and Titus are letters that Paul wrote to them in the last stages of his own ministry.

We meet Timothy in Acts 16, during what is known as Paul's second missionary journey. His first journey took him and Barnabas through Cyprus and the southern part of what we call Asia Minor or Turkey (as any Bible map will show you), founding several churches, including one in the town of Lystra. On his second journey, this time with Silas (Acts 15:36-41), he began by revisiting these same churches. It was on his second visit to the town of Lystra that he met Timothy for the first time. We learn from 2 Timothy that his grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice, had been among Paul's first converts in Lystra, so that Timothy must have responded to the Christian faith in the time between his visits. Paul was very impressed with the women of this family, recognizing in them their sincere and abiding faith as Israelites. This trust in the God of Israel was fully transferred to the Jesus that Paul preached, so that Lois and Eunice represented for Paul the best sort of community pillars in the Church. In fact he expresses the hope that Timothy's mature faith is somewhere near to comparing with theirs! This family testifies to the solidity and stability of intergenerational faith, even in a time of much change and disruption.

The account in Acts makes mention of the fact that Paul had Timothy circumcised "because of the Jews in those parts." Though Timothy's matrilineal line was Jewish, his father was a Gentile, and for reasons not explained, his circumcision was neglected or delayed. Paul wanted to make it clear to all observers that the Gospel of Jesus was good news to both Jew and Gentile, and so he honored Judaism by confirming Timothy in his hereditary faith. The Gospel of salvation through Christ was first and foremost good news to Judaism. (Titus represents a parallel situation, as we will see: since he was a Gentile, Paul refused to compel him to be circumcised; there was no need for Titus first to become a Jew in order to become a Christian – Galatians 2:3.)

These affirmations of the value of tradition may surprise us, especially because Paul worked at a time of such change in religious thinking and practice. But both Acts and 2 Timothy show, nevertheless, the enormous value Paul placed on faithfulness over time to the revealed love and will of God.

RESPOND

Our day, too, is one of fast and momentous changes. These passages can remind us that God's faithfulness, nevertheless, is deeper than we often realize, and can be at work in more profound ways than we sense. Our habits of faithfulness to God in spiritual practice, as well as in family relationships, can have abiding effects. These are two ways we can draw upon the faithfulness of God: "He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'" (Psalm 91:1-2).

PRAY

Lord, Thank You for the love You have shown us through mothers and fathers, and through those who have blessed us as mothers and fathers in the faith. Help us toward the same nurturing and consistent witness that has benefited us so deeply.

READ

1 Timothy 1:1-11

Psalm 92

REFLECT

Paul came to find Timothy to be an unparalleled helper to him in his apostolic ministry. Timothy became a constant co-worker, usually at Paul's side, but often as an emissary to far-flung churches (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor 14:17-21; Phil 2:19; 1 Thes 3:1-3). Today's passage gives us a good glimpse into one of these emissarial missions, disclosing the relationship between Paul and Timothy, and the responsibilities that they both felt in their call to serve the Lord.

Paul reminds Timothy that he appointed him to stay and work out problems in Ephesus, problems with misconceived teachings by certain of the leaders there. It is not easy to place this scenario within the history recorded in Acts, and so some scholars have supposed that Paul never really wrote this letter. The issues are complex, but the fact that this letter makes the clear claim to be from Paul helps decide the matter for many first-rank scholars, and some of the rest of us too. If so, this letter comes from a period after the events narrated by Luke.

The problem in Ephesus seems to have been that some teachers in the community began drawing heavily on their Jewish background, wanting to find a more central place for the Law of Moses in Christian thought and practice. Timothy's best defense, says Paul, is to affirm the right place of the Law as a hindrance to sin and a guide to right living. But he should also go on to affirm that Jesus has brought us more than a revival of the Law. "The glorious gospel of the blessed God," the good news, is that what the Law demanded has now been given within us by the death of Christ, His resurrection, and the outpouring of the Spirit. Instead of worrying about legalistic demands on the one hand, and

irrelevant speculations on the other, "the goal of our instruction is love – from a pure heart, from a pure conscience, and from a sincere faith." The Gospel affirms the Law (the list of evil-doing in verses 9-10 correlates closely to the Ten Commandments, and is condemned not only by the Law but by "sound teaching, according to the gospel..."). But the Gospel points us to a richer grasp of God's life and love in Jesus Christ.

The result is a completely different orientation to life. Instead of living according to an external standard, we as Christians are encouraged to live from the love of God within us. External checks help us confirm that we are on the right track, and they serve to correct our judgments when necessary. But the source of life is God Himself, experienced in relationships such as that of Paul and Timothy, and also in God's own care for us and presence with us.

Timothy, in short, had a double problem: a difficult issue, and difficult personalities to deal with. Paul writes to bolster him both in Christian truth and (as we will see tomorrow) in people skills.

RESPOND

Often our daily life is most comfortable when we don't have to think about it, but can move through the hours responding to external requirements. But this is also what can be most deadening about life: the feeling of obligation to task after task. God calls us to reexamine our commitments in terms of the love we can bring in each thing we are called to do – and to adjust our sense of call if we find areas of life that seem particularly lifeless.

PRAY

Lord, help us with the consistency of our love for You and for others, so that in everything we do, we can say with the Psalmist, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High" (Psalm 92:1).

- D.D.

READ

1 Timothy 4:6-16

2 Timothy 1:6-12

Psalm 93

REFLECT

The relationship between Paul and Timothy, as we have it depicted in the New Testament, touches not only on the professional challenges that Timothy faces, but also on Timothy's personal struggles. In 1 Timothy 4, Paul writing Timothy in Ephesus reminds him first that the "sound doctrine" he must impress upon the straying local teachers is also a resource for him personally. Timothy is to be "nourished on the words of faith and the sound doctrine which you have been following." The particular personal challenges Timothy experiences are hinted here and there: he is relatively young, and needs to be encouraged to stand strong as an "example" of God's gracious work in all of us. Paul also mentions that Timothy has "frequent ailments," and encourages matter-of-fact attention to it.

Most strongly, Paul encourages him in to be really consistent in living out what he knows is true, especially in a consistent reading and teaching of the Scripture, and also in "stirring up the gift of God that is within you by the laying on of hands" (2 Tim 1:6; see also 1 Tim 4:14). The details of this gift have fascinated commentators: was it a gift like healing, or a gift of preaching? Was it the gift of leadership, or of ordination? We may never know precisely; but Paul's intent is clear, that the good things of God need faithful and regular attention if we are to benefit fully from them. Was Timothy inconsistent? Well, I would have to ask, who isn't? The consistency Paul calls Timothy to is probably one that he himself struggled with every day, succeeding perhaps much more effectively than many of the rest of us, but struggling nevertheless. Still, no doubt Timothy had his own challenges with consistency, and Paul no doubt knew it.

The rewards for learning more and more consistency in Christian life are huge, according to Paul. In 1 Timothy 4:16, he writes, "Pay close attention to yourself and your teaching; persevere in these things; for as you do this you will save both yourself and those who hear you." Paul brings together the two themes of professional responsibility and personal responsibility, and calls for consistency in both. In both cases, as we have seen, consistency means drawing consistently on the grace of God. By doing this Timothy will "save" himself and others. What can Paul mean by that? Well, he obviously doesn't mean that Timothy and not God is "the Savior" (1 Tim 1:1). Nor can it mean that Timothy is providing a work of salvation for others, since it is all a matter of relying on the grace already given in Christ (1 Tim 1:2). Rather, Paul is saying that by opening himself to the life of grace, Timothy becomes a living conduit of God's grace, for himself and for those in his charge. We want to avoid a "salvation by works" interpretation here. But we definitely want to affirm the living grace of God that is available in relationships that are shaped consistently by His love. This is how God has chosen to work, and one of the ways His grace reaches us and those we love.

RESPOND

A key to working on consistency in our Christian lives, it seems to me, is to concentrate on one issue at a time. There are the overbearing, difficult issues that seem always to be with us, and there are other elements of consistency that seem simple for us to incorporate as soon as they present themselves. Let's rejoice in the simpler victories, while we never allow those larger issues to be completely neglected.

PRAY

Lord, Thank You for the challenges You place before us, and the promises that come with them. "Your testimonies are fully conformed! Holiness befits Your house, O Lord, forevermore!" (Psalm 93:5).

- D.D.

READ

Galatians 2:1-10

Psalm 94

REFLECT

We know less about Paul's relationship with Titus than with Timothy. He is not mentioned in the book of Acts, but in 2 Corinthians Paul describes how he entrusted him with a sensitive mission to regain the Corinthians' allegiance at a time when it seemed to flag. Titus apparently volunteered because of his own deep care for the Corinthian congregation (2 Cor 8:16-17), and his success brought Paul a vast sense of relief (2 Cor 7:6-7). This glimpse helps us understand Paul's strong faith in him as a fellow-worker, and his confident recommendation of him to the congregations he served (2 Cor 8:23-24).

Our passage for today from Galatians describes an earlier incident in which Paul and Barnabas traveled back to Jerusalem. The purpose was to check in with the apostles in Jerusalem, and to consult with them on the particulars of Paul's preaching. In those early days there were many in Jerusalem who insisted that to be a follower of Jesus you must first become a Jew in every respect. Since Paul had received a revelation to the contrary on the road to Damascus, that the Gentiles were to be recipients of the Gospel in their own right, Paul's ministry must have been the focus of much recrimination and gossip.

In that context it must have been a bold move to travel to Jerusalem, and even bolder to take along Titus, a Gentile Christian. He clearly came under great pressure in Jerusalem to submit to circumcision; Paul says that "false brethren" succeeded in spying on them, and created such a controversy that Paul had to resist "yielding in submission to them" on this point. The stakes were high for Paul: he held his line against the Judaizing of Titus "so that the truth of the Gospel should remain with you [in Galatia]." (Gal 2:5) By his persistence he won his

point, and the Jerusalem "pillars" (Paul seems more than a little sarcastic about them) extended to him "the hand of fellowship" (Gal 2:9)

All of this makes an interesting contrast to what we saw of the case with Timothy. Because Timothy was of Jewish heritage, Paul insisted he receive his neglected circumcision (Acts 16:3). This was not an inconsistency, but rather the opposite. Paul was very clear that the Gospel was given to both Jews and Greeks, but that didn't mean a blurring of the two. The Jewish heritage of the Old Testament and God's dealings with Israel was too valuable to Paul to be ignored or neglected. On the other hand, the preaching of grace was too valuable for it to involve an artificial submission to the older rites. What was at stake in both actions – the circumcision of Timothy, and the refusal to circumcise Titus – was the clarity of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul had discovered that salvation was by grace. Human beings in their flaws could never accomplish the perfection of behavior demanded by a perfect God. And so He sent His own Son to take our place in condemnation. Since we could in no way earn salvation, He granted it in Christ. Titus was a recipient of that free salvation, and Paul was willing to fight for it.

RESPOND

At a recent Wednesday night session, Jerry Newell said that we can all understand law, but none of us have yet grasped grace. How true. We can all grasp what it means to earn benefits here and there by following the rules. But the grace of God is not as intuitive. We learn it by needing it, by experiencing it, by hearing Christ preached afresh, and especially by being channels of His grace in the lives of others. Because we cannot earn, God gives. And He gives everything.

PRAY

Thank you for your grace, O Lord, and for the real and satisfying tasks that it brings for us to do.

- D.D.

READ

Titus 2:1-15

Psalm 95

REFLECT

Our final passage represents the more “normal” challenges of Timothy and Titus in leading their churches. Here we do not hear about dangerous teachers skewing the faith of the congregation (though such persons always lurk – Titus 1:10). Rather we have more general instructions about how the church family can come together in a life of mutual support.

The first ten verses represent instructions to various groups within the church. These are similar to other such instructions elsewhere, though here they are directed not to the leadership structure (as if there is a threat to the church as such) but to men and women, young and old. Here is perhaps the most basic “structure” of the community: the relationships that express families and friendships. Whereas some ideologies, such as communism, have seen fit to wipe out family structures and allegiances, the Christian church affirms these basic relationships – but it does have instructions and exhortations so that they can blossom in Christian love.

While each group is addressed in turn, there are ways in which we can hear a general message being preached to all. “Sound doctrine” is especially teaching that results in appropriate Christian behavior, and its basis is a certain “sensiblyness.” We see older men instructed to be “sensible” (2:2), and see that it includes dignity, as well as grounding in faith, love, and perseverance (not too different from “hope”). The older women are to be sensible in behavior and practice, especially so that they can pass on that sensibility to the younger women (2:5). Young men are to be sensible as well (2:6) – and here Titus himself is addressed in this category. Here is a sensibility that derives not from common sense in general, or aphorisms of the general culture, but things that are sensible IF the Gospel is in fact true. But it cuts both ways, for this sensible behavior will also be admired in the world at large.

This is made crystal clear in verses 11-15, which represents the theological anchor to this passage, and in fact to the whole letter. Calls to renewed behavior are based on the premise that “the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all,” and therefore that it is actually now possible “to live sensibly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” Jesus died, in fact, to “redeem us from every lawless deed.” Here truly is doctrine that accords with godly living.

In reading through these verses, we are reminded that Paul was dealing with a very different culture. The fact that he would address slaves in a separate category from men and women ought to be a shocking reminder of the degrading effects of slavery. Further, women have much more opportunity for diversified roles than the limitation to households assumed by Paul. It is interesting that in both of these cases Paul takes the extra time and space to highlight his reasons for asking for submission: as they assume their social roles without malice or falseness, they can bring credit to the gospel of God, as witnesses in the broader world. This remains good advice for us today as we find ourselves in the situations where we are under someone else’s thumb, unavoidably, and hopefully temporarily. But we can be very grateful that Christianity has had a major role in the abolition of slavery, as well (less incisively) as in the promotion of diverse opportunities for women.

RESPOND

We are reminded that our Christianity is perfectly practical, and that our practices can be thoroughly Christian. Again, there is a challenge to work on our consistency, this time with special application to our witness in the world around us.

PRAY

Lord, Help us today to hear the exhortation of the Psalmist: “Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our God, our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Psalm 95:6-7).

- Dave Dorman

Walk Through The Bible Readings
MONTH AT A GLANCE

December 3-7 Week 49

Monday	Galatians	Psalm 91
Tuesday	Ephesians	Psalm 92
Wednesday	Philippians	Psalm 93
Thursday	Colossians	Psalm 94
Friday	1 Thessalonians 1-3	Psalm 95

December 10-14 Week 50

Monday	1 Thess. 4-6	Psalm 96
Tuesday	1 Timothy	Psalm 97
Wednesday	2 Timothy	Psalm 98
Thursday	Titus & Philemon	Psalm 99
Friday	Hebrews 1-6	Psalm 100

December 17-21 Week 51

Monday	Hebrews 7-10	Psalm 101
Tuesday	Hebrews 11-13	Psalm 102
Wednesday	James	Psalm 103
Thursday	1-2 Peter	Psalm 104
Friday	1-2-3 John, Jude	Psalm 105

PRAYER JOURNAL

This week I am praying for . . .

. . . Brian and Anna Kleinsasser, former members of our congregation, now serving with Youth With A Mission (YWAM). Brian and Anna have four children ranging in age from 5 to 18, and have dedicated their lives to serving God wherever He has called them: Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, and now in the United States as part of YWAM Campaigns/ Impact World Tour.

. . . the people who came to the Community Thanksgiving Dinner, that they will continue to have their needs met.

And . . .
