

LI. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective
The Journey with Christ, the Promised One
“I & II Timothy and Titus—The Books of Church Order and Ardor”
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III
August 4, 2013 – Evening Sermon

We are going to start this study on I and II Timothy and Titus by starting in Acts 20. Here is this marvelous text where the Apostle Paul, after three years of ministry, is leaving the church at Ephesus. He stayed longer at this church than any other church in his ministry. The closest to it was at Corinth where he ministered for eighteen months. Acts 20:17-21 says [17] *Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. [18] And when they came to him, he said to them: “You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, [19] serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; [20] how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, [21] testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.*

There he sums up his ministry for three years. Even though he was under persecution for three years he faithfully ministered and in his ministry he declared the Gospel of Jesus Christ, calling men and women, Jew and Gentile to two things – faith and repentance. It is where you believe in Christ by faith and you turn to Christ by repentance. His ministry was characterized by what Charles Spurgeon called ‘tropical eyes.’ He wept continually for them. With humility of himself yet confidence in the Gospel he faithfully ministered. Now he tells them he is going to Jerusalem and he knows what will happen. I know I will be arrested and put in prison. He will never see their face again. Then he tells them he has to warn them.

Acts 20:26-32 says [26] *Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, [27] for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. [28] Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. [29] I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you (the elders), not sparing the flock; [30] and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. [31] Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. [32] And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.*

I will not be going over the entire address but I commend it to you for your reading. I read this because it sets up our study of I and II Timothy and Titus and what are called historically, the Pastoral Epistles. Generally I’ve been only going over one book of the Bible at 30,000 feet but in this study it will be three books. Just like every verse in each of these books deserves its own attention, these three books do flow together. They flow together for a number of reasons. These are what I call the books of church order and ardor. What the church in its love for Christ, ardor should do and how the church should be ordered, the Apostle Paul is ordering the church and giving the church its marching orders of love and passion to Christ.

At the very moment that Paul is doing this, he is peeling back the cover for us so that we know exactly what every church that seeks to be faithful to Christ in order and ardor, what every church will face in this world, until Christ comes again. In other words, if a church is focused upon Christ, honoring Christ, desiring to serve Christ, Satan does not melt into the woodwork. He comes on the assault. Satan has two assault plans against the church. One is an external assault plan and it's called persecution. He has a second plan and this one usually seems to be more effective than even the first plan. One of my favorite hymns is *In Christ Alone* and in that hymn it says "No scheme of man, no power of hell, can pluck me from His hand." Why was that put in there? It was put in there to give us an assurance that churches that seek to be faithful to Christ and Christians that seek to be faithful to Christ cannot be plucked from the hand of the Lord but there will be schemes against them.

The second assault plan is the assault plan of penetration. The first plan is persecution where through threatening and ridicule Satan would attempt to silence the church by intimidation. The second assault plan of penetration is whereby Satan attempts to silence the church and its witness through infiltration. The infiltration is twofold. He penetrates the membership with grumbling and complaining. He loves to get the fellowship of a church out of fellowship with Him and each other with grumbling and complaining. I'm not talking about a valid handling of false teaching in the church but I'm just talking about the normal complaining of members of how things are going in the church. Like, "I can't believe they used three different patterns on that carpet." One of the ways you can tell a healthy church is they major on the majors and minor on the minors and unhealthy churches, minor on the majors and major on the minors. That's why Paul says to the Philippian church, "Do all things without grumbling or complaining" (Philippians 2:14).

There is another way that Satan penetrates and this is the way we need to be aware of today. He penetrates the membership with grumbling and complaining. He penetrates the leadership with false teaching and false leaders. Here is why I think Paul knew that when he left Satan would attack. It is because Satan had been trying to do it while he was there. That's why he said to the leadership "Among you Satan will penetrate and infiltrate raising up wolves that will teach perverted twisted things. They will take Bible verses and twist them to the destruction of the flock. Secondly, they will lead the flock to themselves away from Christ. It will be all about them and not Christ."

Why does Satan penetrate the leadership? If you strike down the shepherd then the sheep scatter. When we get false shepherds, leaders and teachers then Satan has the flock because leadership works. Good leadership basically brings good results. Bad leadership will bring bad results. Can the Lord overrule those? Yes He can, but by in large He has ordained that leadership works. So then Satan then goes after it.

When I was at East Carolina attending these Marine Corp recon meetings, I was considering the Marine Corp recon at the time. I remember what he said to us in that meeting. He said "Gentlemen, here is the pathway to being an officer but I want to be honest with you. If you become an officer, a second lieutenant in a recon drop in the hot zone your life expectancy is two minutes and fifteen seconds. The enemy knows if they strike down the leader they have the whole platoon. Command and control." Satan does it all the time. That's why he does his best work in seminaries so that he can get that work into pulpits. That's why he loves to do this time and time again. I have taken a

little bit of time with this because this is the way to understand I and II Timothy and Titus.

Have you noticed that I Timothy and Titus are almost the same material? They are almost repetitious. Why? Let's start by looking at I Timothy. I Timothy 1:1-7 says *[1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, [2] To Timothy, my true child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. [3] As I urged you when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine, [4] nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote speculations rather than the stewardship from God that is by faith. [5] The aim of our charge (teaching) is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. [6] Certain persons, by swerving from these, have wandered away into vain discussion, [7] desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make confident assertions.*

Now let's look at Titus. Titus 1:1-5a says *[1] Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness, [2] in hope of eternal life, which God, who never lies, promised before the ages began [3] and at the proper time manifested in his word through the preaching with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior; [4] To Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. [5] This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order...* then he begins to give instructions.

Here is what I want you to see. Paul, at the end of his second missionary journey, had spent three years in Ephesus. Here was this glorious church that had been put together in such a powerful fashion. As he finished up at Ephesus, he has been instructed that he is going to be put into jail. He goes back to report at Antioch. He is arrested in Jerusalem and spends two years in jail there. He could have been freed but he appealed to Caesar and then went to prison up in Rome. Before he left Ephesus he warned the elders saying "False shepherds, teachers and preachers are going to come into your midst. I have been with you for three years preparing you for it. Be on guard for yourselves and therefore for the flock." They did not listen.

When he gets out of his first Roman imprisonment and travels back through Macedonia the first thing he hears is that Ephesus, the gem church, the crown jewel of the ministry in Asia Minor, the mother church of Laodicea, Hierapolis, Smyrna, Philadelphia and Thyatira, this great mother church that had been said they had turned the world upside down, has now fallen into disrepair. They have now become diseased and is not about to fold its tent. So what does the Apostle Paul do?

Let me tell you what he doesn't do. He doesn't say "Close it down. We'll plant another church." He takes his best man and sends him back on a mission and ministry of church revitalization at Ephesus. The short story of this is that God blessed him. How do I know? It is because fifty years later the church is still in place and they have a new pastor named John. Now they need revitalization again because they have left their first love but the Lord has blessed it for fifty plus years under Timothy's ministry. So Paul gives to Timothy a handbook on how a healthy church is to exist. He lays out for him in I Timothy what to do to lead a church back to health and vitality. I Timothy and Titus are

almost redundant, repetitious and why is that? It is because Paul is sending Titus to do the same thing in Crete that he was sending Timothy to do in Ephesus.

Paul is sending Timothy to reclaim and lead the church back to health and vitality. He is sending Titus to Crete to set in order the things that still remain. Paul had been to Crete and planted churches. They now had false teachers and false leaders. Are you getting the picture? How does Satan take healthy, Christ honoring, Kingdom committed, Great Commissioned, great commandment churches and bring them low? Persecution very seldom does it. It is through penetration of the membership or leadership or both. When he penetrates leadership it is false teachers and false leaders. So Paul sends Timothy back and says there are certain people teaching false doctrines. Stop them! This is what true teaching is.

They not only have false teachers but they have false leaders. So what should we do about this? Let's look back at I Timothy. First Paul warns them about false teachers and tells them what true teaching is in I Timothy 1. Now look at I Timothy 2:1-7 which says *[1] First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. [3] This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. [5] For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, [6] who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. [7] For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.*

Paul is telling Timothy to go back and confront the false teaching and as you do that get true teaching in that brings a love for God's Word, from a good conscious, a sincere faith and a pure heart. Then Timothy what always goes with the ministry of the Word is the ministry of prayer. Get prayer back in place. Make this a praying church with protracted, intercessory prayer. A healthy church has two lifelines – prayer and the Word. That's the key. A healthy church usually will be no more healthy than its leaders. Timothy, here is teaching, prayer and here's leadership. Now let's look at I Timothy 3.

I Timothy 3:1-13 says *[1] The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. [2] Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, [3] not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. [4] He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, [5] for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church? [6] He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. [7] Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

[8] Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. [9] They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. [10] And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. [11] Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. [12] Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. [13] For those who

serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

He is saying the leadership has to be reclaimed. So here are the qualifications. The first thing is if you become a leader in the church you're not an office wearer, you're an office bearer. You're not getting a title you're getting a job. It's a fine work that he desires to do. The second thing is that the office does not seek the man. The man seeks the office. God has called me and now I submit to the church to whether this is a valid calling of God or not. Thirdly, you don't become an office because you're saved. You have to be saved but being an ordained leader in the church is not a right attached to your salvation. It is a privilege attached to the progress of your sanctification.

The overseer must be blameless and then Paul lists seventeen qualifications. Paul arranges them in four categories. In I Timothy 3:2-3 he is to be blameless in his personal life. He is not perfect but he is to be blameless. The progress of sanctification is obvious with God's people. He is a one woman man. That would certainly rule out bigamy, polygamy and all of that but literally he is married to only one woman. He only has eyes and heart for his wife. When it is necessary for him to talk with another woman because of his relationship with his wife, you don't even think about it. It has been perfectly clear where his heart is. He is not a lover of money, a drunkard, controlled by wine, greedy, or pugnacious which means he doesn't settle things with his fist. Paul goes through all of these personal qualifications. Then he moves from his personal life to his marital life. He must be able to manage his own household well. If you can't manage your own household you can't take care of the church of God.

Then Paul moves to the church life. He must not be a new convert. There must be a witness in the church that he has walked with the Lord. Here's what happens. A celebrity, an athlete, a movie star, or a politician who confesses Christ we then put them on the speaking tour. We put them right up front to lead and teach and they don't have the slightest idea of what Christianity is yet except enough to be saved. Paul says to put new converts in the crock pot of discipleship. When you move someone to leadership they are not a new convert. They have been discipled, trained and mentored.

Not only is there a personal witness, a family witness and a church witness but in I Timothy 3:7 it says he has a good reputation with those outside the church. Outside the church there is this great testimony that God's work of grace is at work in his life and people see it in the business world, his neighborhood and the community. Then Paul tells the deacons that they are to do and be likewise and then their wives as well. There needs to be a testimony of grace.

Why is this so important? It is because the church will go where its leadership has gone. Very seldom does a church go beyond its leadership and it has usually been the problem with leadership that brings the problems within the church. Ephesus did not listen to Paul but Paul doesn't give up. He sends his best men and says "Let's go after the teaching, prayer and leadership." He puts all of those things in place.

Now let's look at Titus 1:5-6 which says [5] *This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—*[6] *if anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination.* Paul continues and goes through the same qualifications for leadership as he did in I Timothy.

Now let's look at Titus 2:1-5 which says [1] *But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine.* [2] *Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.* [3] *Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good,* [4] *and so train the young women to love their husbands and children,* [5] *to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.* In other words, here is what you believe and here is your behavior. Your behavior opens up the opportunity to declare what you believe but it all starts with good teaching. So Paul talks about again in Titus about teaching, leadership and prayer which are the basic issues.

I want be personal and vulnerable here. Every time I go through this I cannot tell you in the flesh the fear that comes upon me. The last thing I ever want is for you to get up and read about me, our elders or deacons in the Birmingham newspaper. We don't ever want to be an opportunity for ridicule of Christ and His church but even before that we want the Lord to allow us to be an asset through these imperfect vessels saved by grace, to the health and vitality to His church with true teaching, true praying and Godly leadership that is growing in grace – imperfect but growing in grace. So I plead with you again to pray for our pastoral staff for at least one meal a day. Intercede in prayer that we might be faithful to the Lord that His church would be healthy and vital. We are praising God for fifty years of that here but ask God that it would not diminish and that it would move forward. This is what Timothy and Titus are teaching us, the order and ardor of the church.

There is so much more in these epistles. I cannot tell you how rich these epistles are. They are rich when he talks about Godliness. Five times the Apostle Paul says something in I and II Timothy and Titus that he doesn't say anywhere else. He says "It is a trustworthy statement" five times. If Paul were to come here today and say "You can put this in your spiritual bank" would you listen? He says five times in I and II Timothy and Titus "This is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance" and then he gives five statements. Those are five rich statements and my assignment to you is to look those up because I don't have time to cover those in this study.

Now I'd like to look at one other thing in II Timothy. If you have heard what I've said then you'll notice that they call I and II Timothy and Titus the pastoral epistles but I would say to you that I Timothy and Titus are really handbooks of what a healthy church has to have in place to be healthy. I believe II Timothy is the one true pastoral epistle.

So who wrote these three epistles? It is the Apostle Paul.

Where was Paul when he wrote these three books? He wrote I Timothy and Titus after he got out of his first Roman imprisonment. Acts 28 describes Paul going to prison at this time. After that is when he wrote I Timothy and Titus. He wrote II Timothy during his second imprisonment right before he died. He is facing a death sentence in his second imprisonment. So I Timothy and Titus were written sometime between 63 and 65 A.D. If Clement and Eusebius are right Paul died at the end of Nero's reign which means his second Roman imprisonment was sometime between 66 and 68 A.D. and that would have been around the time he wrote II Timothy.

II Timothy is Paul like Elijah putting his mantel on his Elisha, Timothy on how to carry the ministry forward. Paul lays it out for him. So all those who are moving toward ordained ministry and for all of our pastors there can't be a better study than to find out

what Paul says the ministry is all about in II Timothy. It is unbelievably rich as Paul makes these personal applications and he delights in calling Timothy throughout the text 'you man of God.' Paul affirms God's calling of Timothy to be a man of God.

I know this is not culturally en vogue today but there is a difference between men and women. There is a reason Paul says "man of God." He doesn't say person of God but man of God. He doesn't say man of God who acts like a woman. There is something called manliness and something called femininity. They are equal in stature before God but they are distinct and different. We need fathers and we need mothers in this church. We need male leadership and female leadership. Both are necessary. That challenging, coaching, teaching ministry as a man of God as a father in the church is necessary. That nurturing, guiding, teaching of wisdom and kindness from a mother in the church is necessary. Both are necessary and vital.

I want to get more vulnerable here. This year I get prostate cancer and all the thoughts that come with that begin flooding my mind – where does this lead, what is the Lord doing, I'm ready to go home, etc and I'm working my way through all of it. I'm not going to tell you about some of the tests I've recently been through but as I was going through this, being dragged to where I didn't want to go, going through what I didn't want to go through and facing this, my mind went back to when I was 12 years old. I was playing baseball, went to home plate and slid where my arm came out in an "L" shape. I was two miles away from home and walked home. My mind was working in overdrive those two miles I walked home and by the time I got home I was sure that my arm would have to be amputated.

My mother heard me about three blocks away. My mother put a towel over my arm and said probably what any good mother would do when she saw what was happening to me (lied) "It's probably a sprain son, you're going to be okay." She was just trying to get me off the mountain for a moment. We go to the doctor's office and the doctor's not happy because it's a Saturday and he had to come off the golf course to come in and set my arm. With my mom next to me and my dad next to the doctor, the doctor said to my dad "Mr. Reeder, this is a bad break. I'm going to need to put him to sleep." That sounded good to me. My dad said "How much is that going to cost?" My dad was in minor league baseball so you can forget health insurance. It was all cash for us at that time. In minor league baseball there is a lot of month at the end of the money. The doctor said "Well I'll need to keep him over night." My dad said, "How much is that going to cost? Do we have any other options?"

The doctor said "I can give him a shot. It will be a little bit of a challenge." My dad said "He can handle it." I can remember the doctor taking what I thought was the largest needle in all of humanity and two times putting it into my arm. Then the doctor got up on top of the bed, put one knee in my shoulder, grabbed the other one and it took two times before it was finally put in place. I want to tell you what happened before the doctor did that. As the doctor is getting up on that bed and saying "This is going to hurt" my mother came over and put her hand on me and my dad looked at me and said "Son, you can do this." I can't tell you how many times I have thought about that in this last year going through this prostate cancer and in my life. "Son, you can do this."

We need men of God who can look at God's people with confidence in God's grace, declaring that His grace is greater than our sin and His strength is greater than any adversity, to tell God's people for God's glory you can do this. That's why Paul said "I

was with you as a father and a nursing mother” (I Thessalonians 2:7, 11). I cannot think of a better description of a man of God than II Timothy. I commend it to your study. I conclude this study by looking at II Timothy 4 as Paul is ending his life. He is on the verge of death. He knows his death is soon but doesn’t know exactly when. So he is going to keep on living for the Lord. This is what Paul says to Timothy.

II Timothy 4:1-8 says *[1] I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: [2] preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. [3] For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, [4] and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. [5] As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*

[6] For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. [7] I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. [8] Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.

Here is Paul’s charge to Timothy, his Elisha. He tells him to be a man of God and by the grace of God this is what you can do. Preach the Word. Every time you get in the pulpit you feel the presence of God. I solemnly charge you in the presence of God. There is the soon appearing of Christ and the judgment. Every time you get in the pulpit, you man of God, here is what your people desperately need from the pulpit leadership to the session leadership to the diaconal leadership. Every time you rise up for God’s people and for the glory of God you feel the eyelash of God upon you. You hear the footsteps of Christ that is coming. You hear the gavel at the judgment seat in which men and women are going to be consigned to an irrevocable destiny in hell or heaven and you stand between them and that day. You endure and preach. Fight the good fight, keep the faith and be poured out as a drink offering. With burnt offerings there are ashes left but with drink offerings there is nothing left. Pour it all out. When you get to the end there is nothing left. You have given it all for Christ and be sober. There is certainly a place for laughter but you’re not a comedian. You are dealing with the matters of eternity in heaven or hell.

I believe we desperately need in the church today, such Timothys. We need men of God by the grace of God to have confidence that the glory of God is worth giving everything for because of the grace of God that is found in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we could be together with these such rich letters. There is so much breadth and depth, a love for Your church, Your people, the need for sound preaching and teaching in these books and it’s absolutely amazing Father that the church is falling apart and dissolving in our culture. The evangelical church’s ear has gone to those who are dissolving. We are abandoning sound doctrine, preaching, teaching, discipling, evangelism, and prayer because we think it’s a personality, our ingenuity, our creativity. Please make us good stewards of the Gospel within the church

and give us leaders who will not be ranchers that drive a herd but will be shepherds, feeding and leading the flock and even laying down their lives for the sheep. Jesus, please give us that again, I pray this in Jesus' Name, Amen.