

How to Interpret Epistles November 17, 2024 PM

Categories of the Pauline Epistles

- The Eschatological Epistles
 - 1 and 2 Thessalonians A.D. 50-51
- Soteriological Epistles
 - 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans
 - A.D. 52-56 – During 3rd missionary trip
- Prison Epistles
 - Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians
 - A.D. 60-62 from Rome
- Pastoral Epistles
 - 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus – A.D. 63-66

Characteristics

- Apostolic in Nature
 - They don't just state their name, but their authority.
 - Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; 1 Thes. 5:27
- Situational/Occasional in Nature
 - There was a particular reason in writing.
- Intended for the Christian Community

Principles for Interpretation

- Read the book in one setting.
- Seek to understand as much of the original situation as you can from the biblical text.
- Think in paragraphs.
- Seek to understand what is to be understood as normative and what is to be understood as cultural.

Understanding What is Normative and What is Cultural

1. Does the command seem to contradict teaching elsewhere in Scripture.
 - 1 Corinthians 14:33-35

2. Does the rationale for a specific command work equally well in all cultures?
 - 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

3. Does the command appeal to the way that God established things at creation or in other cultures?
 - 1 Timothy 2:8-15

 - 1 Corinthians 14:33-35

4. Does the command reflect a broad cross-cultural principle stated explicitly?
 - Rom. 3:23; 14:14,23

5. Is the command to an individual or to a church?
 - 2 Timothy 4:9-13

 - 1 Timothy 4:11-13