



Teaching the Bible Classically with Dr. Fred Putnam

Lecture 12: Epistles

Outline:

What is an Epistle?

- These are missionary letters intended to be read to a group because someone is physically absent.
- The letter is sent by hand, by a courier or traveler.
- We have many Classical letters from Greco-Roman culture:
 - Condolence
 - Praise
 - Blame/Rebuke
 - Critique
 - Paul is writing these things in the venue of his time.
- Paul addresses public concerns. We have to guess often times about why he writes what he does.

Three Groups of Epistles

- Old Testament: Jeremiah
- Paul's Epistles: Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1-2 Thessalonians, 1-2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- General Epistles: Hebrews, James, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude, The Revelation
 - These are written to apply to a wide group of people.

How do we study these Epistles?

- We are reading a communication from someone who is addressing a situation or a problem, in a place that is far away in a day when communication is slow.
- The nature of the communication is always pastoral.
- Help students think of Epistles not as theological treatises and a list of commands, but rather human communication.
- Read with an imagination and an empathy for the people involved.

Questions

- To whom is this addressed?
- Who is it from? What kind of authority does he claim for himself? How does he greet the church.
- What is their relationship? (for example Paul to Ephesus and Rome)



- What situation(s) does the author address?
- What does he say about their situation?
- How does all of this tie together so the epistle is a message to a particular church?