



1 Timothy - Introduction

Author and Title

The first verse of 1 Timothy clearly states that Paul is the author, and this was universally affirmed until the 19th Century. In the last 200 years a significant shift has occurred in biblical scholarship so that many today deny that Paul actually wrote 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy or Titus. Critics point to ways in which these three letters, collectively referred to as the Pastoral Epistles, differ from Paul's other letters in style, vocabulary, theology, church order and the way in which Paul is portrayed. However, the difference in theology and church order, for example, are typically overstated based on a particular reading of Paul's earlier letters, and based on the effect of reading these three letters as a unit rather than individually, as the rest of Paul's letters are read.

A further example is that some claim that the Pastoral Epistles picture a much more structured church with an emphasis on church officers, especially elders and deacons, rather than the dynamic, Spirit-directed church in Paul's other letters. This overstates the evidence of both groups of letters in opposite directions. Elders are mentioned as early as Paul's first missionary journey: **<<After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, 'It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God.' And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe>>** (Acts 14:21-23), and Philippians is addressed to the bishops and deacons of the church in Philippi: **<<Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons>>** (Philippians 1:1). Furthermore, difference in style and vocabulary is not unusual for a creative mind, especially considering that these letters differ from the other letters in purpose, subject matter and audience; these being the only ones written to co-workers.

Additionally, it is problematic to argue that these works were written under a false name since the early church clearly excluded from the apostolic canon any works

they thought to be pseudonymous. While critics point to the common practice of pseudonymous writing in the ancient world, they usually fail to point out that this practice, although common in the culture, was not common in personal letters, and was categorically rejected by the early church. This can be seen by: <<***As to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we beg you, brothers and sisters, not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as though from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord is already here***>> (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2), and: <<***I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write***>> (2 Thessalonians 3:17). Further confirmation is supplied by Muratorian Canon, and Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 6.12.3.

Tertullian, circa AD160-225, wrote that when it was discovered that a church elder had composed the pseudonymous work, The Acts of Paul, which included a purported Pauline letter, 3 Corinthians, the offending elder ‘was removed from his office’ (Tertullian, On Baptism 17). Accepting as Scripture letters that lie about their origin is also a significant ethical problem. Thus, there is a good basis for affirming the straightforward claim of these letters as authentically written by Paul.

The title indicates that this letter was sent to Timothy: <<***To Timothy, my loyal child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord***>> (1 Timothy 1:2), and its contents confirm that, chronologically, it precedes 2 Timothy.

Date

Some critics have suggested that 1 Timothy does not seem to fit into the narrative of Acts. Others have responded that it could fit into the events in Acts Chapter 20. However, the traditional position has always been that Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment, the one mentioned at the close of Acts: <<***When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him***>> (Acts 28:16), and: <<***He lived there for two whole years at his own expense and welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance***>> (Acts 28:30-31). Following his release, Paul undertook further missionary work, probably including Crete, Ephesus and Macedonia, and was then imprisoned a second time, which resulted in his execution. This reconstruction is supported by statements from 1 Clement 5.7 and Eusebius, Ecclesiastical History 2.22.2-8.

First Timothy then would fit well during Paul’s work between the two imprisonments. If Paul’s arrival in Rome, as narrated in Acts, is dated about AD60, then, allowing a couple of years for the imprisonment, he would have been released in about AD62. If Paul was executed under Nero, who died in AD68, as is generally accepted, 1 Timothy would have been written somewhere in the mid-60s.

Theme

The theme of 1 Timothy is that the Gospel leads to practical, visible change in the lives of those who believe and accept it. It is often thought that the theme is

church order, but the discussion of church offices is simply a piece of the larger argument that the true Gospel, in contrast to false teaching, will always lead to godliness in its adherents.

Purpose

Paul wrote 1 Timothy in order to advise his younger co-worker Timothy concerning issues that were arising at the church in Ephesus, which Paul had predicted in his farewell address to elders in Miletus: *<<I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them>>* (Acts 20:29-30). When Paul left Timothy in Ephesus, he had specifically charged him to deal with some false teachers in the church: *<<I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine>>* (1 Timothy 1:3). Since Paul was then separated from Timothy and the church, he wrote back to him with further instructions. He hoped to return for a visit but wrote in the meantime to address the way in which Christians should behave: *<<I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth>>* (1 Timothy 3:14-15). Throughout the letter Paul grounds Christian behaviour in the Gospel.

The false teachers were the primary reason for Paul writing the letter. The epistle as a whole is bracketed by discussion of the false teaching, and the positive instruction is crafted in direct contrast to the false teachers. The exact nature of the false teaching is unclear. It apparently involved speculation about the law: *<<Some people have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions. Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave-traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me>>* (1 Timothy 1:6-11), and asceticism: *<<Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God's word and by prayer>>* (1 Timothy 4:1-5).

Paul's real concern was with the results of the false teaching. For example, promoting speculations: *<<and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith>>* (1 Timothy 1:4), arrogance: *<<Whoever teaches otherwise and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ*

and the teaching that is in accordance with godliness, is conceited, understanding nothing, and has a morbid craving for controversy and for disputes about words. From these come envy, dissension, slander, base suspicions, and wrangling among those who are depraved in mind and bereft of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain>> (1 Timothy 6:3-5), and greed: <<Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains>> (1 Timothy 6:6-10). Paul addressed the content of the false teaching only in passing but focused on the fact that true Christianity is evidenced by lifestyles shaped by the Gospel. Those whose lives are not shaped by the Gospel show that they have turned away from the faith.

First Timothy is a clear call for the church to live out in tangible ways the ethical implications of the Gospel.

Summary of Salvation History

Christians are to endure suffering for the sake of Christ, looking back on Christ's sufferings and forward to the consummation of salvation at his Second Coming. Their treatment of one another in Christ is to be transformed in the light of his grace toward them.

God's plan brings the blessings of Christ's salvation to people partly by means of the church and its ministries.

Writing Style

The general form of 1 Timothy is that of a NT epistle, and 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus have been called more specifically Pastoral Epistles because each one is a letter written to someone who has pastoral leadership responsibilities. The letter gives advice on the issues of church life on which the recipient needs guidance and encouragement, although Timothy was not actually one of the pastors of a church, for he was more an evangelist and was Paul's liaison, who implemented Paul's instructions to the churches.

The resulting letter is occasional, meaning that the author of the letter addresses the specific situations in the recipient's church that need attention. The Pastoral Epistles are not theological treatises in which Paul systematically explores topics of his choice. Paul takes up the topics in this letter because they are the topics that have been raised.

Finally, near the end of the opening chapter, Paul labels his remarks up to that point as 'this command' that he has issued to Timothy. It is helpful to regard the entire letter as a formal, authoritative command, i.e. a list of duties that Paul is challenging and directing Timothy to perform.

The stance of the author is that of a friend and father in the faith, expressing personal concern over the well-being of a younger church co-worker, and the church in which he ministers. The overarching concern of the letter is to combat false teaching and false teachers. Accordingly, there are detailed contrasts between good and bad spiritual leadership in the church.

Additionally, this letter provides the most complete summary in the Bible of a pastor's ministry and spirituality. There are also lists of spiritual qualifications for officers in the church, as well as advice about caring for people with special needs, such as widows and servants. Three times Paul says that a statement he makes is trustworthy. Refer to 1 Timothy 1:15, 3:1 and 4:9.

The Setting of 1 Timothy

The scene was set in the mid-60's AD, in a region dominated by the authority of the Roman emperor Nero.

Paul most likely wrote 1 Timothy during a fourth missionary journey that was subsequent to those recorded in the Book of Acts, the completion of which preceded this letter.

Writing from an unknown location, Paul wrote to Timothy, who had remained in Ephesus, instructing him on how to deal with issues in the church there.

Ephesus was a wealthy and highly influential port city in the Roman

province of Asia, renowned for its temple of the Greek Goddess Artemis, or Roman Diana.



A map of the Roman Province of Asia



The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus

Key Themes

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Verses</u>
1. The Gospel produces holiness in the lives of believers, and there is no legitimate separation between belief and behaviour. Thus, those who profess faith but do not demonstrate any progress in godliness should question their spiritual state.	1:5; 2:8-15; 3:1-16; 4:6-16; 5:4-6; 5:8; 6:3-5; 6:11-14; 6:18-19.
2. Worldwide evangelisation is essential and is rooted in God's own evangelistic desire.	1:15; 2:1-7; 3:16; 4:10.
3. One key piece of evidence for reception of the Gospel is proper behaviour in corporate worship, i.e. evangelistic prayer, unity, modesty and submission.	2:1-15.
4. Church leaders should be people whose lives are shaped by the Gospel.	3:1-13; 4:6-16.
5. Appropriate honour is a key element in how Christians should relate to one another in the church.	5:1-6:2.
6. The created order, including wealth, is good and is to be appreciated; although it must not be worshipped.	4:4-5; 6:17-19.
7. It is important to labour for the purity and preservation of the Gospel.	1:3-7; 1:18-20; 4:6-16; 6:2b-3; 6:12; 6:20-21.

Outline

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Confronting the False Teaching (1:3-20)
 - a. Warning against False Teachers (1:3-11)
 - i. The charge to deal with false teachers (1:3-7)
 - ii. Proper use of the law (1:8-11)
 - b. Gratitude for Mercy (1:12-20)
 - i. The Lord's Grace to Paul (1:12-17)
 - ii. The Charge to Timothy Renewed (1:18-20)
- III. Descriptions of Gospel-Shaped Living (2:1-3:13)
 - a. Instructions concerning Prayer (2:1-15)
 - b. Qualifications for Bishops and Deacons (3:1-13)
 - i. Qualifications of Bishops (3:1-7)
 - ii. Qualifications of Deacons (3:8-13)
- IV. The Mystery of Our Religion (3:14-16)
- V. False Asceticism (4:1-5)
- VI. A Good Minister of Jesus Christ (4:6-16)
- VII. Duties towards Believers (5:1-6:2a)
 - a. Respectful dealing with church members by age and gender (5:1-2)
 - b. Honouring widows (5:3-16)
 - c. Honouring elders (5:17-25)
 - d. Honouring masters (6:1-2a)
- VIII. Confronting the False Teaching Again (6:2b-21)
 - a. False Teaching and True Riches (6:2b-10)
 - b. Final Charge to Timothy (6:11-21)
 - i. The Good Fight of Faith (6:11-19)
 - 1. Timothy's behaviour in contrast (6:11-16)
 - 2. Charge to the rich (6:17-19)
 - ii. Personal Instructions and Benediction (6:20-21)