



1 Timothy - Summary

Paul, writing from an unknown location, sent this letter to his faithful co-worker Timothy, whom Paul had instructed to remain in Ephesus to deal with the false teachers and the effects their false doctrine was having on the church there.

It is widely accepted that the letter was written in the mid-60's AD while Paul was on an otherwise unrecorded 4th missionary journey. This occurred during the period following Paul's release from imprisonment in Rome, where he remained at the end of the book of Acts, and his final period of imprisonment in Rome, where he was when he wrote his second letter to Timothy shortly before he was executed.

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 was 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. Therefore, the opposition of the false teaching is the key purpose of this letter.

Chapter One

Paul opens the letter by identifying himself as an apostle of Christ, naming his faithful co-worker Timothy as its recipient; a man who Paul clearly held in high regard and affection.

It is apparent that Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to deal with the false teachers whose doctrine was causing problems in the local church, while Paul attended some other business in Macedonia and elsewhere, no doubt. Paul then felt it necessary to write further instruction to Timothy to exhort him in his charge to deal with such men.

Paul concluded the chapter with a heartfelt statement of his personal gratitude toward God for the grace and mercy he had been shown despite his own personal sin, thus giving encouragement to all in the church who could identify themselves as such sinners, knowing that grace and mercy is there for all in such great abundance.

Chapter Two

The first half of this chapter is given over to the requirement for corporate worship, including prayer for all people, especially those outside of the church with leadership authority over the people, for the aim is to see God's creation at peace and subject to good governance, while extending the Kingdom of God through the spread of the Gospel of grace. It has always been God's intention that all of mankind should receive an opportunity for salvation through the Gospel message, that is, by necessity, to be proclaimed to them.

Paul goes on to address behaviour by both men and women in the church gatherings. It seems that disputes were breaking out between the men over issues of doctrine and perhaps authority. Additionally, women were becoming more vociferous in their enquiry about the interpretation of prophecies and perhaps also the role of women in teaching, thus undermining the cultural norm of that era.

First of all, Paul encouraged cooperative behaviour among men in the worship service in relation to the specific task of prayer. He then instructed the women concerning appropriate dress and their behaviour in the worship setting with regard to teaching others.

Chapter Three

The initial focus of this chapter is the personal attributes that should be displayed by those who are called to lead local churches. They are clearly mandatory and not just Paul's recommendations.

The chapter ends with a brief but extremely important summary statement describing the instructions that Paul gives to all churches. It describes the mystery that underpins the Christian faith given in poetic form, a hymn probably well known to the church in Ephesus.

Chapter Four

Having just proclaimed the triumphant mystery of the faith by citing a beautiful hymn that praised the glory and majesty of Christ, Paul returned to earth with a bump, finding that he now had to unravel the mystery of human iniquity.

In this Chapter he revisits the key issue of the false teachers and this time the asceticism they were demanding of those who have chosen to follow them. This was no surprise to Paul for the Spirit had previously informed him of this falling away from the faith. Once again, Paul was easily able to refute the claims of the false teachers by declaring that everything given by God is good, providing it is accepted as such a gift, and done so with a thankful heart.

The remaining part of the chapter is given over to instructing Timothy how he personally was to be grounded in the truth of the Gospel and then to boldly take the message to those in Ephesus, demonstrating its authenticity through his own abilities as a man called by God to fulfil this ministry. Despite his comparative youth, Timothy was to put himself forward as a role model for others to imitate in the Gospel truth.

Chapter Five

The beginning of this chapter is a reminder to Timothy directly, and to all disciples generally, of the need to show respect to all others in the church, particularly with regard to leaders who need to admonish others in the church or conduct disciplinary hearings.

Paul then moved on to instruct Timothy as to how the church was to deal with widows, calling for those with a believing family to be supported by them, and for younger widows to make alternative arrangements, in particular, to find a new husband. However, Paul made it clear that the church has a duty to help those in genuine need, recognising that resources were limited and priorities would need to be established.

The final part of the chapter deals with how the church should honour those in positions of leadership, with regard to appropriate remuneration for those who work hard for the church, especially in preaching and teaching. It also deals with how false accusations against leaders should be refuted and how church discipline should be handled in cases where leaders were guilty of public sin.

The section warns against the hasty selection of leaders, probably a reference for the need to replace the false teachers in Ephesus that Timothy was charged to deal with in this letter as a whole. However, the instruction for the need for discernment holds true throughout the ages.

Chapter Six

Having given instructions to Timothy on how to honour widows and elders, Paul concluded the theme by giving further instructions showing how Christian slaves and servants should honour their masters, whether they are believers or not, for that was the servant's duty in the faith they themselves professed.

Paul returned again to false teaching reaffirming the damage it does and just how far it was from the truth that was taught by Jesus. Not only that but it was clear that they were also attempting to gain significant financial reward for themselves in peddling their lies. The lure of financial reward was perhaps even the motivating factor for them departing from the Gospel.

Paul then warned that seeking wealth simply for the rewards in brings in this life is fraught with dangers, labelling it as the root of all kinds of evils. However, he also noted that wealth can also be seen as a good gift from God and can allow believers who are blessed with wealth to use it to benefit the church and others, thus providing themselves with everlasting riches.

Paul then started to draw the letter to its final conclusion by again returning to the false teachers, exhorting and encouraging Timothy, showing that Paul had every confidence in Timothy's God-given abilities to deal with the problem, praising God for all his goodness. Paul's final thoughts were further encouragement to Timothy to hold on to the truth of what he had been given in the Gospel message of truth.