

1 TIMOTHY

(A.D. 62-63)

Message: Paul writes to encourage young Timothy “*to continue fighting the good fight*” (1:18), and provides practical instruction on how believers are “*to behave in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth*” (3:15).



Title

The Greek title for this letter is ΠροΫϥ Τιμοϥϥεον Αϥ (*Pros Timotheon A*) meaning literally “First to Timothy.”

Author

The author of 1 Timothy was the Apostle Paul. This is the first of three epistles known as the Pastoral Epistles (First and Second Timothy, and Titus).¹ All three of the Pastoral Epistles are letters written by Paul regarding church matters.² Each begins with a Salutation which delineates the Apostle Paul as the author. The Pauline authorship of the Pastoral Epistles has come under serious attack by modern liberal scholars who maintain that they are pseudepigraphal. That is, not written by Paul, but by a “Paulinist;” a follower of Paul who wrote in the name of the great apostle some time after his death, one or two generations removed.³ Both the *external* and *internal evidence* for 1 Timothy support Pauline authorship.

The *external evidence* is quite convincing. The following church fathers accepted this book as canonical and as written by Paul: Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Irenaeus.⁴

The *internal evidence* likewise supports Pauline authorship. The Apostle Paul states that he was the author of this letter (1:13, 15), and who but Paul could refer to himself as an “insolent” person (1:13), or the “chief” of sinners (1:15). Further, the author exhibits the same Pauline sense of divine calling and appointment (2:7); he displays the same Pauline conception of the dependence of character on doctrine as is found in all the recognized epistles of Paul; and he uses the same practical wisdom as is seen in them.⁵

¹The term “Pastoral Epistles” was first used by D. N. Berdot in the early part of the eighteenth century (1703) and popularized by Paul Anton around 1726 (Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, rev ed., 607).

²Guthrie points out that the designation “Pastoral Epistles” is not entirely accurate because these three books cannot be called manuals of pastoral theology (ibid.).

³For a detailed discussion see, Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 607-49; William Hendriksen, *I-II Timothy and Titus*, New Testament Commentary, 4-33; Henry C. Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 253-60.

⁴Thiessen, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 254-55.

⁵Ibid., 255.

Recipients

As the salutation indicates (1:2), Paul is writing to Timothy, a native of Lystra (in modern Turkey). Timothy was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother, and a native of Lystra (Acts 16:1). He seems to have been raised in a godly home and influenced in the things of God by his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). He appears to have been converted to Christ under Paul's ministry during his first missionary journey (1 Tim. 1:2; 18; cf. Acts 14:6-23). It may be that Paul himself had led Timothy to Christ since he constantly refers to Timothy as his "true child in the faith" and "my beloved son" (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Titus 1:4). Timothy became the Apostle Paul's assistant on the second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3). In order to be more effective in ministry among the Jews, Paul circumcised Timothy and ordained him to assist him in the ministry (Acts 16:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6; 4:5). He assisted Paul in establishing works at Troas, Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Athens (Acts 16:1–17:14). After rejoining Paul at Athens, he was sent back to Thessalonica to monitor the progress of the church there, and later returned to Paul at Corinth and assisted in founding the church there (Acts 18:5).

Following the mention of his work at Corinth, the record is silent as to whether he traveled with Paul or not (Acts 18:18–19:1). He is mentioned as working with Paul at Ephesus, during his third missionary journey, and is sent with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Before Paul left Ephesus Timothy rejoined him and traveled with Paul from Ephesus to Macedonia to Achaia, back to Macedonia and on to the province of Asia, at least as far as Troas (Acts 20:1-6).⁶ Once again the biblical record falls silent as to whether Timothy was with Paul on his trip to Jerusalem, during his arrest and rescue at Jerusalem, during his two-year imprisonment at Caesarea, or his trip to Rome.

Timothy is next seen in Rome with Paul where he joins with the apostle in sending greetings to Colossae, Philemon, and Philippi. From Rome he appears to have been dispatched to Philippi (Phil. 2:19-24), after which he once again disappears from the biblical record. After Paul's release from Roman imprisonment, he apparently traveled with Paul ministering together with him in various eastern cities. It seems that Paul left him in Ephesus to care for the church there (1 Tim. 1:3). While working in the church at Ephesus, he received his first letter from Paul, called the First Epistle to Timothy. He was not with Paul, when he was rearrested and quickly taken to Rome, but the apostle sent word requesting him to come to him (2 Tim. 4:9) in what is known as the Second Epistle to Timothy. According to Hebrews 13:23, Timothy himself was imprisoned and subsequently released — whether at Rome or elsewhere, we do not know. Eusebius recorded a tradition that Timothy was later beaten to death by an angry mob at Ephesus because of his stern denunciation of the idolatrous immorality associated with the Ephesians' worship of the goddess Diana.⁷

Date and Place of Writing

⁶Timothy appears to have been with Paul when he wrote 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:1; 19), and must have accompanied him to Corinth, for he sends greetings when Paul writes the Romans (Rom 16:21).

⁷Homer A. Kent, Jr., "1 Timothy" in *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus* (Winona Lake, IN: Moody, 1958, 1982), 75; Robert G. Gromacki, *New Testament Survey*, 293-95.

1 Timothy was probably written from Macedonia some time between Paul's first and second Roman imprisonments. Since Paul was acquitted around March of A.D. 62 and imprisoned again in the Fall of A.D. 67, the letter was written some time between his first and second Roman imprisonments. It is believed that it was probably written from the city of Philippi in about A.D. 62-63.

Historical Setting

It was during Paul's fourth missionary journey that he instructed Timothy to care for the church at Ephesus (1:3) while he went on to Philippi in Macedonia. When he realized that he might not return to Ephesus in the near future (3:14-15), he wrote this first letter to Timothy to develop the charge he had given his young assistant (1:3, 18), to refute false teachings which appears to be a combination of an early Gnosticism, decadent Judaism, and false asceticism (1:3-7; 4:1-8; 6:3-5, 20-21) and to supervise the affairs of the growing Ephesian church (church worship, 2:1-15; the appointment of qualified church leaders, 3:1-13; 5:17-25).

Paul had, approximately 8 years previous, warned the Ephesian elders at Miletus, saying, "I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). From 1 Timothy 1:5 it appears Paul was correct in his analysis of the future of the Ephesian church. Timothy may have tried to excuse himself from the task of dealing with such as situation on the basis of his young age (1 Tim. 4:12), poor health (1 Tim 5:23), and a certain reluctance for confronting wholeheartedly the situation (1 Tim 4:15-16). In this historical context Paul writes the letter known as 1 Timothy.

Unique Characteristics

1. The book is extremely practical in that it deals with local church order and organization. Paul stresses how believers are "to conduct themselves in the household of God" (3:18).
2. 1 Timothy serves as a practical "handbook" for Pastors by providing the first manual of instruction for the local church.
3. A major problem in the Ephesian church was a heresy that combined Gnosticism (see 1 John: Historical Context), decadent Judaism (1:3-7) and false asceticism (4:1-5). Paul writes to instruct Timothy (and through him the church) how to confront these false teachers and to refute their heresy.

Outline

I. Salutation 1:1-2

- A. The Author: Paul (1:1)

- B. The Recipient: Timothy (1:2a)
- C. The Blessing (1:2b)

II. Instructions Concerning Sound Doctrine 1:3-20

- A. The Danger to Sound Doctrine: in Ephesus (1:3-11)
 - 1. The promotion of false doctrine (1:3-4)
 - 2. The purpose of sound doctrine (1:5)
 - 3. The perversion of sound doctrine (1:6-7)
 - 4. The purpose of the Law (1:8-11)

- B. The Demonstration of Sound Doctrine: in Paul's Life (1:12-17)
 - 1. Paul's praise for God's grace (1:12-14)
 - a. For being placed into ministry by Jesus Christ (1:12)
 - b. For being shown mercy as an ignorant blasphemer (1:13)
 - c. For being shown God's grace (1:14)
 - 2. Paul's praise for God's plan of salvation (1:15-17)
 - a. For Christ's coming to save sinners (1:15)
 - b. For Christ's demonstration of patience (1:16)
 - 3. Paul's praise for God's greatness: doxology (1:17)

- C. The Directed Responsibility of the Minister Toward Sound Doctrine (1:18-20)
 - 1. The charge to fight the good fight against false doctrine (1:18)
 - 2. The charge to feed on sound doctrine (1:19a)
 - 3. The charge to faltering believers: rejection of sound doctrine (1:19b-20)

III. Instructions Concerning Conduct in the Church 2:1-3:16

- A. Public Worship of the Church (2:1-15)
 - 1. The place of prayer in public worship (2:1-8)
 - a. The objects of prayer (2:1-2a)
 - b. The reason for prayer (2:2b-4)
 - c. The basis for prayer (2:5-7)
 - d. The manner of prayer (2:8)
 - 2. The place of women in public worship (2:9-15)
 - a. Their dress (2:9-10)
 - b. Their demeanor (2:11-15)
 - 1) Required to learn in subjection (2:11-12)
 - a) Not allowed to teach or exercise authority over a man (2:12a)
 - b) Not to speak out but must remain quite (2:12b)
 - 2) Reason for their subjection (2:13-14)
 - a) Creation: man formed first (2:13)
 - b) Fall: man not deceived, woman fully deceived (2:14-15)

- B. Public Officials of the Church (3:1-13)
 - 1. The office of overseer: their features and functions (3:1-7)
 - a. The aspiration and honor of the office (3:1)
 - b. The qualifications for the office (3:2-7)
 - 2. The office of deacon (3:8-13)
 - a. The qualifications for the office (3:8-12)
 - b. The reward of the office (3:13)
- C. Purpose for the Charge to Church Order (3:14-16)
 - 1. The planned visit of Paul and possibility of delay (3:14)
 - 2. The program of the Church of God (1:15)
 - 3. The profession of the Church: the mystery of godliness (1:16)

IV. Instructions Concerning Timothy's Dealings in the Church 4:1-6:21a

- A. Dealing With False Teachers (4:1-10)
 - 1. The prediction and danger of false teachers (4:1-5)
 - a. The time of their coming predicted (4:1a)
 - b. The source of their false teaching (4:1b-2)
 - c. The content of their false teaching (4:3a)
 - d. The refutation of their false teaching (4:3b-5)
 - 2. The prescription and defense against false teachers: Godly ministers (4:6-16)
 - a. Implement the teaching of sound doctrine (4:6)
 - b. Ignore old wives' tales: worldly fables (4:7a)
 - c. Institute godliness and discipline in personal life (4:7b-11)
 - d. Invoke a godly example to believers (4:12)
 - e. Institute the ministry of the Word (4:13)
 - f. Ignore not spiritual gifts bestowed for service (4:14-15)
 - 3. The promised reward for faithful teachers (4:16)
- B. Dealing with Various Groups Within the Church: Pastoral Care (5:1–6:2)
 - 1. Controlling principle (5:1-2)
 - 2. Concerning widows (5:3-16)
 - a. Dealings with older widows (5:3-10)
 - 1) True widows are to be honored (5:3)
 - 2) True widows are to be supported (5:4-8)
 - a) Duty of relatives (5:4)
 - b) Definition of a derelict widow (5:5)
 - c) Definition of a dead (sinful) widow (5:6)
 - d) Demanded to be above reproach (5:7)
 - e) Description of uncaring relatives (5:8)
 - f) Demands of a "true widow" (5:9-10)
 - b. Dealings with younger widows (5:11-16)
 - 1) The problem of idleness (5:11-13)
 - 2) The prescription; they should remarry (5:14-16)

3. Concerning elders (5:17-25)
 - a. Elders who serve are to be rewarded (5:17-18)
 - 1) To be shown honor (5:17a)
 - 2) To be supported financially (5:17b-18)
 - b. Elders who sin are to be reprimanded (5:19-21)
 - 1) Corrected publicly before all the church (5:19-20)
 - 2) Corrected without partiality (5:21)
 - c. Elders who should be ordained (5:22-25)
4. Concerning slaves (6:1-2)
 - a. Responsibility of slaves of unbelieving masters (6:1)
 - b. Responsibility of slaves of believing masters (6:2)
5. Concerning false teachers (6:3-10)
 - a. Their promotion of false doctrine (6:3-5a)
 - b. Their pursuit of financial gain (6:5b)
6. Concerning Godly living (6:6-16)
 - a. The principle of contentment (6:6-8)
 - b. The problem of seeking wealth (6:9-10)
 - c. The promotion of a proper walk (6:11-16)
 - 1) The command to develop a proper walk: flee, follow, and fight (6:11-12)
 - 2) The charge to maintain a proper walk: until Christ appears (6:13-16)
7. Concerning the rich (6:17-19)
 - a. Instructions concerning the proper attitude (6:17)
 - b. Instructions concerning the proper practice (6:18)
 - c. Instructions concerning the proper ambition (6:19)

V. Concluding Charge to Timothy and Benediction 6:20-21b

- A. The Concluding Charge to Timothy (6:20-21a)
 1. Final appeal to guard that which had been entrusted to him (6:20a)
 2. Final appeal to avoid spurious teachings and vain arguments (6:20b-21a)
- B. The Concluding Benediction (6:21b)

Argument

This very personal letter by Paul, sent to Timothy, his “true son in the faith,” may be divided into five sections. The first section of the letter opens with Paul’s Salutation (1:1-2), in which Paul identifies himself as the author, Timothy, who he calls his “true child in the faith,” is identified as the recipient, and he concludes his introduction with a blessing.

The second section deals with Instructions Concerning Sound Doctrine (1:3-20). Three segments are noted in this section. First, Paul points out the danger to sound doctrine that was being experienced in Ephesus (1:3-11) by showing them the nature of the false teachers’ doctrine (1:3-4), which was similar to the Judaizing-Galatian error that promoted sanctification through obedience to the Mosaic Law. He shows how the Judaizers’ use of the Law is an actual perversion of sound doctrine (1:6-7), and how the true purpose of the Law was designed to promote godliness (1:8-11). Secondly, Paul uses the example of his own experiences as a true

demonstration of sound doctrine. He praises God for His mercy and grace, and shows how his life under the grace of God far exceeded his past life under the Law (1:12-17). Christ came to save sinners from the curse of the Law, which the Law could never do. The Law condemned men to death as sinners, but Christ works salvation in men through grace. Paul breaks out in a doxology of praise to God as he reflects on His graciousness and greatness (1:17). Paul concludes by admonishing Timothy to fight the good fight against false doctrine (1:18-20), to stay strong by feeding on sound doctrine (1:19a), and to reject those who reject sound doctrine (1:19b-20).

In the third part of the letter Paul delivers Instructions Concerning Conduct in the Church (2:1–3:16). This section is also divided into three segments. The first concerns the the proper conduct to be practiced by believers in the public worship of the Church (2:1-15).

The apostle discusses the place of prayer in the public worship service, as well as the place of women in the public worship service. Concerning the former matter, Paul stresses the objects, reason, basis, and manner of prayer (2:1-8). In the latter matter, he instructs women to dress modestly and to display a demeanor of submissiveness (2:9-15). Secondly, Paul discusses the qualifications for public officials of the Church, that is for elders and deacons (3:1-13). The apostle concludes this section by discussing the reasons for his issuing this charge to Timothy to implement church order (3:14-16). In light of his absence and possible delay in being able to come to Ephesus and deal with the problems in person, Paul charges Timothy with the responsibility to implement proper conduct in the church (1:15), in order to provide a godly profession of godliness through the church members (1:16).

The fourth part of the letter deals with Paul's giving Instructions Concerning Timothy's Dealings in the Church (4:1-6:21a). Two segments are presented in this section. Paul begins by dealing with false teachers, who he predicts will come in the latter times, and whose heresy and false teachings will cause some to depart from the faith (4:1-5). He then provides a prescription and defense against false teachers: godly ministers are to implement the teaching of sound doctrine, ignore old wives' tales, institute an example of godliness to all believers, and anticipate rewards for their faithful service (4:6-16). Second, Paul provides young Timothy with instructions for exercising pastoral care in dealing with various groups within the church (5:1–6:2). The controlling principle is to treat all men with dignity and respect (5:1-2). Widows are to be honored and cared for by their relatives, and only by the church if the relatives refused to meet their needs, if they were over sixty years of age, a spiritual individual, and if they were a "widow indeed," one incapable of self-support (5:3-10). Younger widows are commanded to remarry in order to avoid the problems of idleness and gossip, which would bring condemnation upon themselves and the church (5:11-16). Elders who serve are to be shown honor and supported financially (5:17-18). Likewise, elders who sin are to be reprimanded publicly before all the church, and that without partiality (5:19-21). The ordination of elders is to be undertaken with caution (5:22-25). Christian servants are responsible to honor their masters by serving them faithfully (6:1); and especially those who were fortunate enough to have a believing master (6:2). The promotion of false doctrine is to be rejected, and the false teachers' per-suit of illicit financial gain duly noted (6:3-5). In order to promote godly living, Christians should exhibit contentment, not pursue covetousness, and promote a proper walk by fleeing evil, following after godliness, and fighting the good fight of faith until Christ appears (6:6-16). Paul closes this section by instructing the rich in the church to not concentrate on their riches, which causes conceit, but on God (6:17-19). They needed

to promote the proper attitude, perform the proper practice, and evidence the proper ambition (6:19).

The final section records Paul's Concluding Charge to Timothy and His Farewell Benediction. Paul appeals to Timothy to guard that which had been entrusted to him, and to avoid spurious teachings and vain arguments (6:20-21a). Concluding Benediction (6:21b).