

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 80: The Book of 1 Timothy

Introduction:

The next three books in Bible order, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are often referred to as the "Pastoral Epistles" because they were written to an individual pastor rather than to a church or group of churches.

I consider them to be business letters from the church founder and overseer to his local ministers as part of his ongoing commitment to train leadership and promote the teaching of sound doctrine in these very young churches. I will, therefore, begin by looking at the three elements of a business letter: Who is it from? Who is it to? What is it regarding?

FROM: The Apostle Paul

Even though there is strong internal evidence (Paul identified himself as writer), and external evidence (confirmation of the early church fathers), that Paul did, in fact, write all three of the pastoral letters there are many skeptics. I will deal with their major arguments one by one:

1. The travels mentioned do not fit into the historical Acts grid.

Acts is not a complete and definitive account of all of Paul's activities or travels. More importantly, Luke's account ends in Acts 28 and other Scripture indicates that Paul was released from his house arrest and continued to travel extensively among the churches for several years before his re-arrest, final trial, and execution.

2. The organization of the church seems more like that of the second century than that of the first. The description of the Gnostic-like problems also seem to match the full-blown Gnosticism of the second.

If you study the organization of the second century church, comparing it with information in the Bible, you will find little difference from the organization instituted by the Apostles in the first.

The problems Paul addressed in the church at Ephesus applied more to the Judaic Legalism which was just one part of what became the full Gnostic system of the second century.

3. The Greek vocabulary and style differ from other letters attributed to Paul.

Vocabulary and style always depend on the audience and purpose of a letter. The Pastoral Epistles are written to close personal co-workers, with the express purpose of aiding in their ministry. This lends to a more professional, even a more literate, vocabulary and style. Also, Luke may have been the scribe in these letters that would account for a high tone and vocabulary.

Paul was released from house arrest in AD. 62 or 63. During the following years he traveled to a number of cities including Ephesus. He left Timothy behind, as his personal representative to pastor the church, train men to solve a problem of weak leadership, and deal with other problems that existed.

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Paul went to Macedonia on his way to Nicopolis (Titus 3:12) and, while there around AD. 63, he wrote his first letter to Timothy and one to Titus. About this time, Nero began his organized campaign against Christians and by AD. 66 or 67 Paul was re-arrested, imprisoned, and executed. In his final days, while facing imminent death, he wrote II Timothy.

TO: The Pastor Timothy

The man Paul left in Ephesus to pastor the church was his "*true child in the faith*," coworker, and companion, Timothy.

He was born in Lystra, a city in Galatia, now modern Turkey (Acts 16).

His father was a Greek Gentile and his mother was a devout Jew. His mother, Eunice, named him Timothy, which means "one who honors God," and she and her mother, Lois, trained him in the Old Testament Scripture from his childhood (II Tim. 3:15).

Paul met Timothy and probably led him to Christ on a stop in Lystra (Acts 14) during his first missionary trip. Later, on his second trip, he found him to be a young man of good reputation both at home and in Iconium. He decided to take him along as a protégé and co-worker (Acts 16) and Timothy remained faithful to Paul until his death in AD. 68.

Timothy ministered in Berea (Acts 17:14), Athens (Acts 17:15), Corinth (Acts 18:5), and traveled to Jerusalem with Paul (Acts 20:4). Paul often sent him to churches as his personal representative or trouble-shooter (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10, Phil. 2:19, 1 Thes. 3:2). He also spent some time in prison (Heb. 13:23), but we don't have the details as to when, where, or why.

Timothy became one of Paul's closest friends and companions and II Timothy is the last recorded letter he wrote. He, Luke and, interestingly, Mark, were the men Paul wanted with him when he was deserted by all but Luke and they undoubtedly witnessed his execution.

RE: Church Organization and Administration

Timothy was still a very young man who was asked to do very important and difficult tasks in the growing and training of the early church. This time

Paul had assigned him to pastor the church at Ephesus, which probably had ministries throughout Asia Minor.

Paul's great desire was to visit Timothy and help him in person, but in the meantime this letter would give him sound advice and guide him in the work.

OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF I TIMOTHY

There are three distinct aspects to the letter:

1. Personal

Timothy is encouraged to "*fight the good fight, keeping faith and a good conscience*" even though others have been unfaithful and he is younger than many of the people he is guiding in leadership.

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2. Organizational

Paul passes on hints for the orderly arrangement and behavior of the local church, including qualifications for its leaders (not so much positional as ethical), order in services, and behavior toward various members.

3. Doctrinal

Paul dealt with false teaching that was having an impact on the young churches. Some of his doctrinal topics include: 1. The Law (1:7-11); 2. Prayer (2:1-8); 3. Women in the church (2:9-15); Leadership (3:1-16) 5. Last Days (4:1-3); 6. Care of widows (5:3-16); Use of money (6:6-19)

Paul's solution to problems brought by immature members or false teachers is always the same. He restates the Apostles Doctrine and lets problems and errors fall under its weight.

I. DOCTRINE (Chapter 1)

Paul didn't always use his title when writing to churches but always did when writing to pastors who were under his care. He speaks with authority, but reminds Timothy that he is his *"true child in the faith."*

A. False Doctrine (3-11)

Paul is writing to warn Timothy of the dangers of "strange doctrine" which is permeating the churches in Asia Minor.

He seemed eager to join Paul and work with him again, but Paul urged him to stay at home and deal with those influencing the church and to restrain them from teaching their false doctrine in Ephesus.

In 6:20 Paul says, *"O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is called 'knowledge'"* indicating that the false teachers were probably the forerunners of the second-century Gnostics.

Paul characterizes them as:

1. Teachers of Jewish myths and fictitious stories based on obscure genealogies and wild speculation (v 4).
2. Interested in long-winded and fruitless discussions as if they are teachers of the Law, even though *"they do not understand either what they are saying or the matters about which they make confident assertions"* (v 7).

They do not understand that the Law is good in that it restrains evil, but sound teaching is the glorious gospel. And what is that?

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B. True Doctrine (12-20)

Paul's standard for evaluating what is or is not sound teaching is the message of God's grace in Christ that was entrusted to him.

Looking back at his life as an aggressive sinner, he has a great sense of gratitude and thanksgiving. God not only saved him but also allowed him to serve. He states the truth clearly in verse 15,

"It is a trustworthy statement, deserving of full, acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all."

He points to himself as an example of this great mercy (vv. 16-17). Then he charges Timothy to *"fight the good fight"* and stand firm against those who have stumbled in their faith. (vv 18-20)

II. DEVOTION (Chapter 2)

Paul next turned his concerns to problems in worship at the Ephesian church. He begins with specific instruction about the place of prayer in worship, and then he discusses the role of women.

A. Prayer (1-8)

Paul urges that "entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made for all men." (v. 1) Prayer is one of the specific elements that God instructed be included in our worship.

We are to pray for our brothers, people in authority, and even for our enemies. Our prayer in regard to people in power is important because they are the ones who keep order allowing us to *"lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."*

But, there is a more noble reason to pray. Prayer is addressed to our God *"who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (v 4). Paul includes three basic truths of the gospel:

- 1. There is only one God** vs. you can become a god.
- 2. There is only one approach to God, the man who was, in reality, God in the flesh, the man Christ Jesus** vs. reaching God through emanations, or spirits, or secret knowledge.
- 3. Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for all** vs. one must know and do the right things to pay his own sin debt. Verse 8 indicates that "the men" of the assembly were to take the leadership in public prayer in a united and holy way.

B. Women (9-15)

"Likewise" in verse 9 ties the teaching about women in the church to the previous verse. Just as the men are to take the lead in public prayer, women are to:

1. Dress modestly, so as not to call attention to themselves (v 9).
2. Display a quiet, submissive spirit (v 11).

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3. Not assume the office of teacher, or usurp authority in the church (v 12)

This instruction is based on the relationship of man and woman from the time of the original creation (vv. 12-15).

III. DEMANDS (Chapter 3)

Continuing his instructions related to the church, Paul turned to the matter of leadership. He considered church leadership a noble task worthy of the aspiration of righteous men.

A. Bishops/Elders (1-7)

The word "*overseer*" was a word Paul borrowed from the officers presiding over civil or religious organizations in Rome. The elder is the principle official in the local church, called by the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28), recognized by other elders (1 Tim. 4:14), and qualified by the requirements listed in this passage:

Paul brackets the **character qualifications for elder**, beginning with a man being "*above reproach*" (v 2), and ending with a man who has "*a good reputation with those outside the church*" (v 7). These leaders must then, be respected by members of the church and members of the community.

This honorable life-style includes a high morality: A one-woman man; temperate, sober-minded, respectable, not addicted, and not in it for the money.

It also includes a degree of social development: Gentle; not quarrelsome; and hospitable.

There is, what's more, a necessary giftedness and ability to lead: Able to teach: in control of his household; mature and experienced.

The **job of an elder** is to:

1. Teach the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17).
2. Provide direction and administration (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17)
3. Shepherd, or lead, feed, and protect, the flock (Acts 20:28)
4. Guard against doctrinal error (Acts 20:28-31)

B. Deacons (8-16)

Paul next discusses the qualifications for deacons which are virtually the same as those for elders.

Generally the service of deacons, and the word does mean servant, was meant to free the overseers to give full attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:2-4). Before being elected as deacons they were expected to have experience in the ministry of the church (3:8-10; 12-13).

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Verse 11 applies the same qualifications to women. Since the Greek phrase "wives" simply means "the women," and since there are no parallel requirements for elders wives, this could refer to deacon's wives or female deacons. We also have many recorded incidences of women serving, seemingly in official capacities, in the New Testament church.

IV. DANGERS Chapter 4)

Paul returned to his attack on heresy and the heretics. In fact, he turned up the heat a notch, intensifying both his language and his tone.

A. False Teachers (1-5)

As the repository and guardian of the truth, the church must be continually aware of the strategies of their enemies. Also, false teaching is, by its very nature, a "*doctrine of demons*" (v 1) and is propagated by "*the hypocrisy of liars*" (v 2).

The believer is to live a life of balance and freedom, not by renouncing the world to retreat into self-denial, nor plunging into a life of uncontrolled indulgence (vv. 3-5).

B. True Teachers (6-16)

Paul explains to Timothy that it is part of his job to guard the truth and refute false teaching in the church. In turn, the church was to confront and correct the errant teaching in two specific ways:

1. By teaching correct doctrine (vv. 6-7).
2. By living godly, obedient lives (vv. 8-10).

The heretics were teaching asceticism, forbidding marriage and the eating of certain foods but Paul reminded them that God has given all things to be appreciated and used for God's glory.

In verses 11-16 Paul addressed a potential problem that was bound to crop up when Timothy asserted his pastoral authority to deal with problems in the church.

Timothy was very young and older believers might not be eager to follow his counsel. How did Paul suggest he deal with this? Timothy is to earn the right to be followed by being a righteous example to his flock in the areas of "*speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity*" (v 12), using his gifts (v 14) to teach the Scriptures.

He was to be "*absorbed*" in his ministry, and watching his life and teaching so as to be effective and benefit his flock (vv. 15-16).

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V. DUTIES (Chapters 5 and 6)

Paul moved from his instruction of Timothy and spoke to the various groups within the church.

A. Pastoral (5:1-6:2)

1. Sinning Members (5:1-2)

In dealing with members of the church needing correction, Paul suggests they treat them as they would members of their own families.

Rather than "*sharply rebuking*" older men and women they should treat them with respect, as they would their mother and father. Younger people were to be corrected with love and kindness, as with a brother or sister.

2. Widows (5:3-16)

In regard to widows, Paul suggests guidelines for coming to their aid (vv 3-8), enabling them to work in the church (vv. 9-10), and encouragement for younger widows to remarry so they have a proper means of support (vv 11-16).

The church had the responsibility for the support of older widows who had no family, "*widows indeed*"(v 3).

3. Elders (5:17-25)

The elders were not only to teach but to provide oversight for the church. The leaders who did this well were to be respected and given "*double honor*"(v 17). We know that this honor includes financial support because of the two illustrations in verse 18.

Leaders in the early church just as today were not perfect. Their sins were to be dealt with, but criticism of leaders was to be rejected unless accompanied by conclusive evidence. To avoid the need, leaders should be examined and chosen carefully.

4. Slaves (6:1-2)

Slaves were encouraged to honor their masters and be respectful, especially if the master was a believer because they were beloved brothers, and because it brought honor to God.

B. Personal (6:2-21)

1. False Teaching (6:3-5)

Paul identifies characteristics of false teachers:

1. They teach a "*different doctrine*" that does not "*agree with sound words.*" (v. 3)
2. They are conceited and interested in "*controversial questions*" and "*word games.*" (v. 4)

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3. They are in it for the money. (v. 5)

And speaking of money . . .

2. Money (6:6-19)

Paul knew that money could be made into a false god and that misplaced affection could bring all kinds of evil. Money rightly used, however, can advance the work of God and be changed into heavenly treasure.

3. Truth (6:20-21)

Paul concludes with a personal challenge to Timothy:

1. Guard the truth.
2. Don't engage in empty talk.
3. Avoid arguments based on faulty "*knowledge*."

Lesson:

1. The church is God's way of equipping us to minister to believers and non-believers alike.
2. God has given the church leaders to:
 - 1) Teach the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17).
 - 2) Provide direction and administration (1 Tim. 3:5; 5:17).
 - 3) Shepherd, or lead, feed, and protect, the flock (Acts 20:28).
 - 4) Guard against doctrinal error (Acts 20:28-31).
3. Church members must confront and correct false teaching in two specific ways:
 - 1) By teaching correct doctrine (vv. 6-7).
 - 2) By living godly, obedient lives (vv. 8-10).