

WHERE WE HAVE BEEN

Over the last five years, we have covered Ephesians, Galatians, and 1 John. We have covered many doctrines and discussed many passages that are both informative and challenging.

Ephesians – A short systematic theology teaching the reader the basics of the promise and grace of God, the reality of the New Man (the Church) as the pillar of truth, the method and measure of Spiritual maturity, the necessity of walking as children of God in love, and knowing the need to prepare for the difficulties of spiritual warfare.

Galatians – A disciplinary letter from Paul because the believing Jews were convincing Gentiles that they needed to be circumcised and follow the Law of Moses. The letter teaches the necessity of maintaining a proper doctrine in regard to the Gospel and the Spiritual Maturity of the Believer.

1 John – This is a disciplinary letter about the need to reject false doctrine that was propagated by false teachers. The letter provides the fatherly desire to have the believers maintain a belief in Jesus and love the brethren. But this also provides the guidance to reject false teachers using the Apostolic Doctrine as the standard by which all would-be teachers are held accountable.

So, we have covered a concise lesson on Doctrine, a correction on doctrine, a correction on identifying false teachers, and now we are going to cover three books (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) on the proper qualifications and choosing of a leader or teacher.

INTRODUCTION

For the Church, both in the First Century and today, the book of 1 Timothy is instrumental in the government and function of local assemblies.

The book of 1 Timothy stands as a timeless blueprint for the church's life and leadership. Building on our studies of Ephesians (the church as God's new creation), Galatians (guarding the gospel's purity), and 1 John (discerning true doctrine), 1 Timothy equips us to establish godly order in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.

Written to address false teaching in Ephesus and empower Timothy's leadership, this epistle provides authoritative guidance on church governance, including qualifications for elders and deacons, proper church function, and care for the needy. As we embark on this verse-by-verse journey, we will approach the text with reverence, using a consistent Literal-Grammatical-Historical method to uncover its plain meaning, examine key Greek terms, and understand its first-century context. Though some passages challenge modern norms, 1 Timothy calls us to uphold God's design for His church, applying its principles to strengthen our understanding.

AUTHOR

Except for liberal theologians, there is no question that Paul the Apostle is the author of this letter. We will operate this study with Paul as the author as a given. Anyone who wishes to discuss the question through modern critical analysis, we'll do so on an individual basis.

There is no indication of where Paul was or when this letter was written. We can give it a range, but any specific conclusion would be simply an opinion. There is no indication that Paul is in danger or in prison (unlike 2 Timothy).

What we do know is that it is after Paul left Timothy in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3). Biblical data points to two potential timelines for the epistle's composition: one during Paul's third missionary journey (around AD 58, tied to events in Acts 19–20) or after his release from the Roman imprisonment described in Acts 28 (around AD 63–65).

However, several internal Biblical details make the later date more probable. In 1 Timothy 1:3, Paul recalls urging Timothy to remain in Ephesus while he (Paul) proceeded to Macedonia. This does not align smoothly with Acts 19:22, where Paul sends Timothy ahead to Macedonia from Ephesus, while Paul remains behind briefly before following. Additionally, in Acts 20:25, Paul tells the Ephesian elders at Miletus that they "will never see [his] face again," indicating no immediate plans to return to Ephesus, yet 1 Timothy 3:14 expresses Paul's hope to visit Timothy there soon, and 1 Timothy 4:13 instructs Timothy on conduct "until I come." These elements fit better with a post-Acts scenario, after Paul's release from the two-year house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:30–31).

Supporting evidence for such a release includes Paul's expressed expectation of freedom and further ministry in Philemon 22 ("prepare a guest room for me, because I hope to be restored to you in answer to your prayers") and Philippians 1:25–26 (anticipating continued fruitful labor and a future visit to Philippi). Moreover, 2 Timothy 4:16–17 reflects on a past "first defense" where Paul was "delivered from the lion's mouth," implying a prior acquittal or release, contrasting with his current dire situation in that epistle. This allows for additional travels not recorded in Acts, during which Paul could have revisited Asia Minor, left Timothy in Ephesus, and written from Macedonia or elsewhere.

Thus, the most probable date is AD 63–65, between Paul's release (around AD 62) and his second arrest leading to martyrdom (around AD 66–67, as inferred from 2 Timothy's tone of impending death). As for Paul's circumstances, the epistle gives no indication of imprisonment, danger, or restriction (unlike Philippians or 2 Timothy); he appears free to travel, having recently departed Ephesus for Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3), and is focused on instructing Timothy amid reports of false teaching in the church (1 Timothy 1:3–7; Acts 20:29–

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31 as a prophetic warning now realized). The overall tone is one of fatherly encouragement and authority, with Paul planning future visits (1 Timothy 3:14-15) and expressing no personal peril.

In this letter, Paul takes on the role of a strong and loving father. He is both strict and powerful, but at the same time loving, caring, and encouraging.

RECIPIENT

Timothy was a native of Lystra/Iconium. In the New Testament, he is referenced a total of twenty-eight times. Church tradition suggests he was born around AD 17.

The mother of Timothy was a Jewess named Eunice. She later, however, became a Believer in Jesus (Acts 16:1, 2 Timothy 1:5). His father was a Greek. The grandmother of Timothy, on his mother's side, was named Lois, and she, too, became a believer. Both women were likely evangelized during Paul's first journey to the city in AD 46, when he healed a cripple man, but soon after was stoned to death and resurrected (Acts 14).

According to Paul, Timothy was taught the Scriptures as a child (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Note that the Old Testament was the foundation on which salvation could be understood. The first time Paul is acquainted with Timothy is in Lystra, around early AD 50, soon after he began his second journey. Timothy joins Paul after Paul inquires about his reputation (Acts 16:1-3).

At the time Paul met Timothy, they were roughly 48 and 20s, respectively. Based on the recommendation of several church members both in the city and in Iconium, Paul decides to take the young man with him as he travels preaching the gospel (Acts 16:2-3). Before this can happen, however, the Apostle has him circumcised.

The Bible records that, after Timothy was commissioned to serve by Paul and church brethren (1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6), he ministered in at least five New Testament churches (1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 1 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:19-22, Acts 17:14, and 1 Timothy 1:3).

Timothy accompanied Paul on most of his second journey after he left Lystra. Scripture then informs us he was with the Apostle in Ephesus during his third missionary journey. While in the city, he and a man named Erastus are sent by Paul to minister to brethren in Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Later, he meets with others at Troas to accompany the Apostle through Asia on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-5).

Paul is imprisoned in Rome, beginning in AD 61. While he is in prison, he writes four epistles, three of which mention Timothy being with him (Philippians 1:1, 2:19, Colossians 1:1, Philemon 1:1). After he is released, Paul and Timothy travel back to Ephesus where Timothy is eventually left while Paul begins his travel to Macedonia and to other unknown locations, but we speculate this is when Paul goes to Spain. Paul is eventually arrested again and is in Rome

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a second time, and just before his death, he requests his closest friend visit him and bring his personal copies of his writings (2 Timothy 4:9,13, 21).

OCCASION AND PURPOSE

The occasion for 1 Timothy arises from reports of false teaching disrupting the church in Ephesus, fulfilling Paul's earlier warning to the Ephesian elders that "savage wolves" would arise to distort the truth (Acts 20:29-31). Paul notes specific issues, such as false teachers promoting myths, genealogies, vain speculations, and misuse of the Law (1 Timothy 1:3-7). Having left Timothy in Ephesus to address these challenges, Paul writes to strengthen his young disciple, who may have faced doubts due to his youth and timidity. The letter serves as a formal charge, reinforcing Timothy's apostolic authority to confront false teachers and fulfill his calling (1 Timothy 1:18-19; 6:20-21).

The purpose of 1 Timothy is twofold: to encourage and empower Timothy to lead the Ephesian church with boldness and to provide timeless guidance for the church's organization and conduct. Paul urges Timothy to remain steadfast in his ministry (1 Timothy 4:12-16), equipping him to correct false doctrine and establish sound teaching. Simultaneously, the letter outlines principles for church governance, including qualifications for elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13), proper attitude among believers (1 Timothy 2:1-15), and care for widows (1 Timothy 5:3-16). As Paul states, he writes so that Timothy and all believers may know "how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:14-15). Thus, 1 Timothy serves as both a personal exhortation to Timothy and a foundational guide for every church to function according to God's design.

CENTRAL IDEA

1 Timothy 3:14-16 – I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, *I write* so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth. By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, Was vindicated in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Proclaimed among the nations, Believed on in the world, Taken up in glory.

INTERPRETIVE DIFFICULTIES

The book of 1 Timothy contains several passages that raise interpretive questions due to their cultural, historical, or theological complexity. These challenges, when approached with careful word studies and sound hermeneutical principles, can be clarified by considering the specific context of Paul's instructions to Timothy. Below are key passages that require thoughtful study:

1. Delivered to Satan? (1 Timothy 1:20)

What does Paul mean by handing Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan? Is this church discipline, excommunication, or is this some form of physical Apostolic judgment?

2. Limitations on the Role of Women? (1 Timothy 2:9–15)

Paul's instructions on women's behavior and roles in the church raise questions about their application today. Are these directives specific to the Ephesian context, possibly addressing local cultural issues or universally binding?

3. Saved by Childbearing? (1 Timothy 2:15)

The statement that women "will be saved through childbearing" is puzzling. The main question here is "saved by what?"

4. Husband of One Wife? (1 Timothy 3:2,12)

The qualification for elders and deacons to be "the husband of one wife" prompts debate. Does it prohibit polygamy, remarriage after divorce, or require marital fidelity?

5. Deaconesses? (1 Timothy 3:11)

The reference to "women" in the context of deacon qualifications raises questions. Does it describe female deacons, the wives of deacons, or another role in the church?

6. Depart from the Faith? (1 Timothy 4:1)

Paul warns that some will "depart from the faith" by following deceptive teachings. What are the implications for eschatology? Is this happening today, or is this more specific still to happen in the future?

7. List for Widows Indeed? (1 Timothy 5:3-16)

Paul's criteria for enrolling widows in church support raise questions about their purpose. Was this a formal order of widows, a welfare system, or a ministry role, and is this applicable today?

8. Elders Worthy of Double Honor? (1 Timothy 5:17)

The phrase "worthy of double honor" for elders, especially those who preach and teach, seems unclear. Does it refer to financial support, respect, or both, and how should churches implement this instruction?