

FIRST TIMOTHY

AUTHOR

There is widespread consensus that Paul is the author, and the opening salutation (greeting) points to Paul. This is the first of Paul's final series of letters—which along with 2 Timothy and Titus are called the Pastoral Epistles. First Timothy offers practical and pastoral advice from the aging apostle Paul to a young pastor named Timothy working in the church at Ephesus. More than a decade prior to writing this letter, Paul had first met Timothy in the city of Lystra—in Asia Minor—where Timothy was known and respected by the Christians (Acts 16:1–4). Upon recognizing Timothy's impressive qualities, Paul recruited the young man to travel with him as he continued his second missionary journey. The presence of Timothy would have met an important need for Paul, their friendship coming on the heels of Paul's split with his close friend and partner in missions, Barnabas (Acts 15:36–41).

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

During a prior missionary journey Paul had instructed Timothy to care for the church at Ephesus (1:3) while he went on to 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 (1:3–7; 4:1–8; 6:3–5, 20–21) and to supervise the affairs of the growing Ephesian church (church worship, ch. 2; the appointment of qualified church leaders, 3:1–13; 5:17–25).

A major problem in the Ephesian church was a heresy that combined Gnosticism, decadent Judaism (1:3–7) and false asceticism (4:1–5).

DATE

First Timothy was written sometime after the events of Acts 28, at least eight years after Paul's three-year stay in Ephesus (Acts 19:10).

RECIPIENT

As the salutation indicates (1:2), Paul is writing to Timothy, a native of Lystra (in modern Turkey). Timothy's father was Greek, while his mother was a Jewish Christian (Acts 16:1). From childhood he had been taught the OT (2 Tim 1:5; 3:15). Paul called him "my true son in the faith" (1:2), perhaps having led him to faith in Christ during his first visit to Lystra. At the time of his second visit Paul invited Timothy to join him on his missionary travels, circumcising him so that his Greek ancestry would not be a liability in working with the Jews (Acts 16:3). Timothy helped Paul evangelize Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 17:14–15; 18:5) and was with him during much of his long preaching ministry at Ephesus (Acts 19:22). He traveled with him from Ephesus to Macedonia, to Corinth (Acts 20:3), back to Macedonia, and to Asia Minor (Acts 20:1–6). He may even have accompanied him all the way to Jerusalem. He was with Paul during the apostle's first imprisonment (Php 1:1; Col 1:1; Phm 1).

Following Paul's release (after Acts 28), Timothy again traveled with him but eventually stayed at Ephesus to deal with the problems there, while Paul went on to Macedonia. Paul's closeness to and admiration of Timothy are seen in Paul's naming him as the co-sender of six of his letters (2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1,2 Thessalonians and Philemon) and in his speaking highly of him to the Philippians (Php 2:19–22). At the end of Paul's life he requested Timothy to join him at Rome (2 Ti 4:9,21). According to Hebrews 13:23, Timothy himself was imprisoned and subsequently released—whether at Rome or elsewhere, we do not know.

Timothy was not an apostle. It may be best to regard him as an apostolic representative, delegated to carry out special work (cf. Titus 1:5).

OUTLINE

- Greetings (1:1–2)
- Warning against False Teachers (1:3–11)
 - The Nature of the Heresy (1:3–7)
 - The Purpose of the Law (1:8–11)
- The Lord's Grace to Paul (1:12–17)
- The Purpose of Paul's Instructions to Timothy (1:18–20)
- Instructions concerning Church Administration (chs. 2–3)
 - Public Worship (ch. 2)
 - Prayer in public worship (2:1–8)
 - Women in public worship (2:9–15)
 - Qualifications for Church Officers (3:1–13)
 - Elders/Overseers (3:1–7)
 - Deacons (3:8–13)
 - Purpose of These Instructions (3:14–16)
- Instructions concerning False Teaching (ch. 4)
 - False Teaching Described (4:1–5)
 - Methods of Dealing with It Explained (4:6–16)
- Instructions concerning Different Groups in the Church (5:1—6:2)
 - The Older and Younger (5:1–2)
 - Widows (5:3–16)
 - Elders (5:17–25)
 - Slaves (6:1–2)
- Miscellaneous Matters (6:3–19)
 - False Teachers (6:3–5)
 - Love of Money (6:6–10)
 - Charge to Timothy (6:11–16)
 - The Rich (6:17–19)
- Concluding Appeal and Benediction (6:20–21)

Chapter One Notes:

Chapter Two Notes:

Chapter Three Notes:

Chapter Four Notes:

Chapter Five Notes:

Chapter Six Notes:

SECOND TIMOTHY

Author, Date and Setting

After Paul's release from prison in Rome in a.d. 62 (Acts 28) and after his fourth missionary journey, during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul was again imprisoned under Emperor Nero c. 66–67. It was during this time that he wrote 2 Timothy. In contrast to his first imprisonment, when he lived in a “rented house” (Acts 28:30), he now languished in a cold dungeon (4:13), chained like a common criminal (1:16; 2:9). His friends even had a hard time finding out where he was being kept (1:17). Paul knew that his work was done and that his life was nearly at an end (4:6–8).

Reasons for Writing

Paul had three reasons for writing to Timothy at this time:

1. Paul was lonely. Phygelus and Hermogenes, “everyone in the province of Asia” (1:15), and Demas (4:10) had deserted him. Crescens, Titus and Tychicus were away (4:10–12), and only Luke was with him (4:11). Paul wanted very much for Timothy to join him also. Timothy was his “fellow worker” (Rom 16:21), who “as a son with his father” (Php 2:22) had served closely with Paul (1 Cor 4:17). Of him Paul could say, “I have no one else like him” (Php 2:20). Paul longed for Timothy (1:4) and twice asked him to come soon (4:9,21).
2. Paul was concerned about the welfare of the churches during this time of persecution under Nero, and he admonishes Timothy to guard the gospel (1:14), to persevere in it (3:14), to keep on preaching it (4:2) and, if necessary, to suffer for it (1:8; 2:3).
3. Paul wanted to write to the Ephesian church through his letter to Timothy (4:22).

Outline

- Introduction (1:1–4)
- Paul's Concern for Timothy (1:5–14)
- Paul's Situation (1:15–18)
- Special Instructions to Timothy (ch. 2)
 - Call for Endurance (2:1–13)
 - Warning about Foolish Controversies (2:14–26)
- Warning about the Last Days (ch. 3)
 - Terrible Times (3:1–9)
 - Means of Combating Them (3:10–17)
- Paul's Departing Remarks (4:1–8)
 - Charge to Preach the Word (4:1–5)
 - Paul's Victorious Prospect (4:6–8)
- Final Requests, Greetings and Benediction (4:9–22)

Chapter One Notes:

Chapter Two Notes:

Chapter Three Notes:

Chapter Four Notes: