

Introduction to I Timothy

As the apostolic period was coming to a close it became important for Paul the Apostle to formalise an appropriate order within the local church. I Timothy is the first of three letters classified as pastoral epistles because they contain principles for pastoral care and the model for church governance in the local church setting.

Author

Among conservative scholars there is no doubt that Paul the Apostle wrote this letter and the other pastoral epistles (II Timothy and Titus). These letters themselves claim Pauline authorship.

Some scholars however, question Pauline authorship on the grounds that:

- 1) Paul's travels described in the pastorals do not fit anywhere into the historical account of the book of Acts,
- 2) The church organisation described in them is more typical of the second century,
- 3) The vocabulary and style are different from that of the other Pauline letters.

These objections are easily explained:

- 1) The book of Acts does not contain a complete history of the life of Paul since his first trial and acquittal, second trial and death are not mentioned.
- 2) The church organisation described in this letter was already being exercised (refer Phil 1:1 and Acts 14:23)
- 3) Linguistic style is influenced by many factors such as context, content and audience.

Date & Recipients

Paul wrote this first pastoral epistle to his companion and student in the faith Timothy, who had been instructed to stay behind in Ephesus by Paul in a pastoral capacity. The dating of this letter is somewhere around the mid 60's (63-66 AD) as Paul was acquitted from his first Roman trial in 62 AD. Paul's reference to his going from Ephesus to Macedonia (1:3) suggests that he may have been in Macedonia when he wrote I Timothy.

The Church of Ephesus

Paul helped found the church of Ephesus during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18-21) and ministered there for three years during his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1-41). Following his release from prison in Rome, sometime after the events in Acts, he returned to the city with Timothy who stayed behind to minister within the church.



About Timothy

Timothy was the son of a Greek gentile father and a devout Jewish mother named Eunice (2 Tim 1:5). The name "Timothy" comes from two Greek words: timan ("honor") and theos ("God") and means "He Who Honours God." Timothy was a close companion of Paul from the time of Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 16:1-3) and probably was converted to faith in Jesus Christ on Paul's first missionary journey (Acts 14:1). Timothy is described by Paul as "*my true child in the faith*" (1:2) which suggests that Paul led Timothy to faith. Timothy and Paul shared a close relationship as mentor and student. Timothy was a young man (4:12), how young has been debated among scholars, with most conservatives suggesting he was somewhere in his 30's. The Greek word "youth" used to describe Timothy referred to anyone under the age of 40, however given that Jewish men had the authority to be teachers (Rabbis) from the age of 30 and considering both the writer and the recipient of the letter were Jews it is likely Timothy was as young as someone in his 20's.

Purpose of the letter

This letter served to guide Timothy in the conduct of his pastoral responsibilities until Paul was able to be with him in person. Major themes throughout this letter are:

- A personal call for Timothy to remain faithful
- Instructions for conduct within the local church
- Instruction concerning worship
- Governance of the local church
- Warning against false teaching
- Apostasy
- Pastoral care
- Godly living

Outline of the letter

I. Salutation 1:1-2

II. Timothy's mission in Ephesus 1:3-20

A. The task Timothy faced 1:3-11

B. Exhortations to be faithful 1:12-20

1. A positive encouragement 1:12-17

2. A negative warning 1:18-20

III. Instructions concerning the life of the local church 2:1—4:5

A. The priority of prayer for people's salvation 2:1-7

B. The primary responsibilities of the men and the women in church meetings 2:8-15

C. The qualifications for church leaders 3:1-13

1. Qualifications for Elders 3:1-7

2. Qualifications for Deacons 3:8-13

D. The nature of the local church 3:14-16

E. The problem of apostasy in the church 4:1-5

IV. Instructions concerning leadership of the local church 4:6—5:25

A. The leader's personal life and public ministry 4:6-16

B. Basic principles of effective interpersonal relationships 5:1-2

C. How to deal with widows and Elders 5:3-25

1. Provisions for widows 5:3-16

2. The discipline and selection of Elders 5:17-25

V. Instructions for groups within the church 6:1-19

A. Slaves 6:1-2

B. False teachers 6:3-10

C. Those committed to Christ 6:11-16

D. The wealthy 6:17-19

VI. Concluding charge and benediction 6:20-21