

1 TIMOTHY

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BACKGROUND

Chronological and biographical details in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus suggest that Paul wrote these three letters after being released from house arrest in Rome (see [Date and Location](#)). The letters are traditionally called the "Pastoral Epistles" because in them Paul, perhaps sensing death was near, focused on laying a firm foundation for the churches he had established.

On his second missionary journey Paul had met Timothy, a young man of Greek and Jewish heritage ([Acts 16:1-3](#)) who had been brought up with a solid knowledge of Scripture ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)). Timothy became Paul's disciple and trusted assistant and would remain so right up to the time of his death (see [2 Tim. 4](#)). Though Timothy was apparently shy and retiring ([1 Tim. 4:12](#); [1 Cor. 16:11](#)), Paul had left him in Ephesus as his personal representative ([1 Tim. 1:3](#)). He wrote this letter to instruct Timothy in that work ([1 Tim. 3:15](#)).

AUTHOR

Paul ([1 Tim. 1:1](#); see [1 Tim. 2:7](#); see [Romans: Author](#)).

DATE AND LOCATION

Paul's travel notes in 1 Timothy through Titus ([1 Tim. 1:3](#); [2 Tim. 1:17](#); [2 Tim. 4:9, 13, 20](#); [Titus 1:5](#); [Titus 3:12](#)) do not match any events in Acts. This plus Paul's sense of impending death in 2 Timothy suggests the following chronology for Paul's later years:

- He was released from the house arrest that had begun in [Acts 28:30-31](#).
- He traveled and evangelized widely, as reflected in the travel notes cited above.
- He was then arrested again:
 - The 2 Timothy travel notes suggest an emergency situation ([2 Tim. 1:17](#); [2 Tim. 4:9, 13, 20](#)).
 - Several comments in 2 Timothy reflect prison life ([2 Tim. 1:8](#); [2 Tim. 2:9](#); [2 Tim. 4:6-22](#)).
- He was then martyred. Paul expected this in 2 Timothy, and tradition strongly suggests it.

1 Timothy was probably the first of the three letters, being written A.D. 62-64 from Macedonia ([1 Tim. 1:3](#)). Titus was written a little later, with 2 Timothy coming three to five years later.

» See also: [Illustration: Epistles of Paul, The](#)

PURPOSE

- To encourage Timothy in his faith ([1 Tim. 1](#))
- To instruct him concerning church organization ([1 Tim. 2-3](#))
- To instruct him concerning personal conduct ([1 Tim. 4-6](#))

UNIQUE FEATURES

- 1 Timothy is one of the best Bible resources on church organization.
- It emphasizes "right teaching" ([1 Tim. 1:10](#)) but is primarily practical rather than doctrinal.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Colossians and 1 John:

- All deal with the Gnostic heresy.

2 Timothy and Titus:

- All reflect Paul's pastoral concern for churches.

[2 Thes. 2](#); [2 Tim. 3](#); [2 Peter 2](#); and *Jude*:

- These, along with [1 Tim. 4](#), warn of apostasy.

OUTLINE

1. FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT ([1 Tim. 1](#))

1. Salutation ([1 Tim. 1:1-2](#))
2. Warning about false teachers ([1 Tim. 1:3-11](#))
- C. Paul's testimony ([1 Tim. 1:12-17](#))
- D. Timothy encouraged in the fight ([1 Tim. 1:18-20](#))

II. PREPARING CHURCHES FOR THE GOOD FIGHT ([1 Tim. 2-3](#))

- A. Exhortation to prayer ([1 Tim. 2:1-7](#))
- B. Women in the church ([1 Tim. 2:8-15](#))
- C. Leaders for the church ([1 Tim. 3](#))
 1. Bishops ([1 Tim. 3:1-7](#))
 2. Deacons ([1 Tim. 3:8-13](#))
 3. The mystery of godliness ([1 Tim. 3:14-16](#))

III. PREPARING PASTORS FOR THE GOOD FIGHT ([1 Tim. 4-6](#))

- A. Warning of apostasy ([1 Tim. 4:1-11](#))
- B. Exhortation to leadership ([1 Tim. 4:12-16](#))
- C. Respect for all; care for widows ([1 Tim. 5:1-16](#))
- D. Honoring and supporting elders ([1 Tim. 5:17-20](#))
- E. Advice on leadership, health ([1 Tim. 5:21-25](#))
- F. Christian bond servants ([1 Tim. 6:1-2](#))
- G. False teachers; greed; contentment ([1 Tim. 6:3-10](#))
- H. The good fight of faith ([1 Tim. 6:11-16](#))
- I. Proper use of wealth ([1 Tim. 6:17-19](#))
- X. Conclusion ([1 Tim. 6:20-21](#))

TIMELINE

A.D. 35:	Paul's conversion
c. A.D. 51:	Timothy joins Paul on 2nd journey
A.D. 60-64:	Paul imprisoned, released, writes 1 Timothy
c. A.D. 67:	Paul martyred

[1 Tim. 1:1-2](#) *His trusted child.* Paul addressed this letter to Timothy, "my true child in the faith" (see [2 Tim. 1:2](#); [2 Tim. 2:1](#)). Paul's affection for Timothy was perhaps all the greater if, as is likely, he had no natural children.

[1 Tim. 1:3-11](#) *False professors of the law; the true purpose for the law.* Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus to help disciple the believers there ([1 Tim. 1:3](#); see [1 Tim. 3:15](#)). One major concern was the influence of the Judaizers (see exposition on ^s[Galatians 1-4](#)), who were trying to force other Christians to obey the law without even understanding it themselves ([1 Tim. 1:3-7](#)). The law was given to expose sinners ([1 Tim. 1:9-10](#); see [Romans 3:20](#); [Romans 5:20](#)), not to burden believers ([1 Tim. 1:4-5, 8](#)).

[1 Tim. 1:12-17](#) *"What I was, what he did, what I now am."* Even more than any Judaizing heretic, Paul himself had once blasphemed the gospel and persecuted believers. Paul viewed his subsequent salvation as a prime example of God's grace ([1 Tim. 1:14-16](#)). He spoke of it often (see [Acts 22](#); [Acts 26](#); [Galatians 1-2](#); [Phil. 3](#)), and thousands through the ages have been led to Christ by his story.

1 Tim. 1:18-20 *Spiritual sons, sinking ships.* Paul charged Timothy to "fight well in the Lord's battles" (compare [1 Tim. 6:12](#)), thus avoiding the spiritual "shipwreck" others had suffered. On "turned them over to Satan," see exposition on [§1 Corinthians 5:1-8](#). On the heresy that earned Hymenaeus this punishment, see [2 Tim. 2:17-18](#). Prophecies had been made concerning Timothy's future ministry ([1 Tim. 1:18](#)), perhaps by the elders who commissioned him ([1 Tim. 4:14](#)).

1 Tim. 2:1-7 *Pray for peace and for the gospel.* We are to pray for everyone, including those in authority, so that we might live in peace ([1 Tim. 2:1-2](#)). But the main purpose of our prayers is that the gospel may go forth unhindered, for Jesus is the only Mediator between God and humankind ([1 Tim. 2:3-7](#)).

1 Tim. 2:8-15 *Men and women in the church.* Men should seek to maintain an atmosphere of holiness and unity in the church ([1 Tim. 2:8](#)). Women should concentrate on developing inward, spiritual beauty ([1 Tim. 2:9-10](#)). They should "wear decent and appropriate clothing and not draw attention to themselves" ([1 Tim. 2:9](#)). They should "listen and learn quietly and submissively" ([1 Tim. 2:11](#)). They may have various teaching roles in the church (see exposition on [§1 Corinthians 14:26-40](#)) but not those involving authority over men ([1 Tim. 2:12](#)). Paul gave two reasons for this:

- the order of creation ([1 Tim. 2:13](#); see [1 Cor. 11:8-9](#))
- the order of transgression ([1 Tim. 2:14](#))

Women will be "saved through childbearing" and faithfulness ([1 Tim. 2:15](#)). There are many suggested interpretations for this statement:

- That though pain in childbirth was one result of humanity's original sin ([1 Tim. 2:14](#); see [Genesis 3:16](#)), God gives special protection in that ordeal to Christian women.
- That by being homemakers, women will be saved from the corruption of society.
- That by being homemakers instead of church leaders, they will avoid being judged as teachers of heresy.
- Since the original Greek reads "*the* childbearing," some suggest Paul was referring to the birth of Christ.

Paul's teachings on the role of women in the church should be seen in light of his recognition of and respect for the spiritual gifts of women in his day (see exposition on [§1 Corinthians 14:26-40](#)) and his proclamation of the equality of men and women in Christ (see exposition on [§Galatians 3:26-4:7](#)).

1 Tim. 3:1-13 *So you want to be a leader?* Anyone desiring to be an "elder" or "bishop" in the church is to be commended, but he must meet rigid spiritual qualifications. He must be considered above reproach by his family and even by nonbelievers, as well as by the church. Such high standards are necessary, considering the crucial responsibilities of church leaders (see [Hebrews 13:17](#)).

The Greek word used here for "elder" (also translated "bishop") is *episkopos*, meaning "overseer." It is often used interchangeably with the Greek word *presbuteros* (used in [Acts 20:17, 28](#); [Titus 1:5-7](#)).

Many Protestant scholars identify this office with that of the pastor (see [Ephes. 4:11](#)), while others see it as a separate role, involving one or more leaders (see [1 Tim. 5:17](#)).

An elder should be "faithful to his wife" ([1 Tim. 3:2](#)) or, in the original Greek, "a one-woman man." There are two main interpretations of this requirement:

- That an elder should not be a polygamist. This meaning is unlikely, because
- Paul had already forbidden polygamy for all believers (see [1 Cor. 7:2](#); [Romans 7:1-3](#)); such a restriction on elders would have been redundant.
- Rome had outlawed polygamy. There is no evidence that the early church ever faced the problem.
- That an elder should not be divorced. This view seems the more likely one.

The phrase "a one-woman man" is reversed concerning widows, who should be "one-man women" ([1 Tim. 5:9](#)).

The qualifications for deacons ([1 Tim. 3:8-13](#)) are virtually the same as those for elders. "Deacon" is *diakonos* in Greek, meaning "servant," so presumably Paul had in mind someone who would serve under the elders, such as those selected in [Acts 6](#). Though deacons were not required to be able to teach as were the elders ([1 Tim. 3:2](#)), their qualifications describe men of great spiritual depth.

Though not clearly stated, we can assume that Paul viewed the offices of elder and deacon to be limited to men:

- He talked about the wives of these officers, but not about their husbands.
- His earlier denial of the authoritative teaching role to women would preclude their serving as elders.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Church Officers, The](#)

[1 Tim. 3:14-16](#) *A hymn to God our Redeemer.* As Paul instructed Timothy concerning the church, he did so to preserve the gospel in all its majesty, of which he now spoke in words that may have been from a hymn ([1 Tim. 3:16](#)). God

- "appeared in the flesh," referring to his becoming human (the Incarnation; see [Isaiah 7:14](#); [Isaiah 9:6](#); [John 1:14](#); [Galatians 4:4](#)). This was unimaginable in the normal course of nature (see [Daniel 2:11](#)).
- was "shown to be righteous by the Spirit" (see [Matthew 3:16](#); [John 15:16](#)).
- was "seen by angels." Christ's earthly ministry was observed by
 - elect angels (see [Matthew 4:11](#); [Luke 2:13](#); [Luke 22:43](#); [1 Peter 1:12](#))
 - evil angels (see [Mark 1:23-26](#); [Mark 5:1-13](#))
- was "announced to the nations," (see [Matthew 28:18-20](#); [Acts 1:8](#); [Romans 15:18-19](#)).
- was "believed on in the world." Though officially rejected as Israel's Messiah, our Lord left in his wake a powerful minority group of dedicated believers (see [Acts 2:41](#); [Acts 4:4](#); [Acts 9:42](#); [Acts 11:21](#); [Acts 17:4, 34](#); [Acts 18:8](#)).
- was "taken up into the skies" (see [Acts 1:9](#)).

On "mystery" ([1 Tim. 3:16](#)), see exposition on [^sCol. 1:24-29](#).

[1 Tim. 4:1-11](#) *Apostasy alert.* Paul foresaw increasing apostasy in the days ahead ([1 Tim. 4:1-5](#)) and charged Timothy to warn people about such deviations, to avoid useless doctrinal speculations, and to stay spiritually fit ([1 Tim. 4:6-11](#)). Asceticism ([1 Tim. 4:3](#)) was a key ingredient of Gnosticism (see exposition on [^sCol. 2:4-10](#)).

Peter, James, John, and Jude, as well as Paul, use phrases such as "last times" ([1 Tim. 4:1](#)), "last days," or "last time" with reference to the period between Christ's ascension and his return (see [2 Tim. 3:1](#); [Hebrews 1:2](#); [James 5:3](#); [1 Peter 1:5](#); [2 Peter 3:3](#); [1 John 2:18](#); [Jude 1:18](#)).

[1 Tim. 4:12-16](#) *Examples, exhorters.* Rather than allowing the church to perhaps look down on him because of his youth or inexperience, Timothy should be an example to them in all areas of spiritual life ([1 Tim. 4:12](#); see [Background](#)). Three key ingredients should mark his teaching of God's Word ([1 Tim. 4:13](#)):

- "reading" (information)
- encouraging (application)
- teaching (interpretation)

Paul exhorted Timothy to faithfully develop his spiritual gift ([1 Tim. 4:14](#); see [1 Tim. 1:18](#)). What we don't use, we lose (see [Hebrews 2:1-3](#)). Timothy's spiritual progress should be evident to all, so that they would want to follow him. A growing pastor means a growing church; no man can lead others where he has not gone himself. By leading the church, Timothy would "save" both himself and them ([1 Tim. 4:16](#))—not from eternal damnation, but from God's judgment of their stewardship (see exposition on [§1 Corinthians 3:10-17](#)). They would avoid being placed on the shelf as useless vessels (see [1 Cor. 9:27](#)).

[1 Tim. 5:1-2](#) *Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers.* Fellow believers should be regarded as a close-knit spiritual family and should be treated with respect.

[1 Tim. 5:3-16](#) *A word about widows.* We should look out for the emotional and financial welfare of older widows, if they truly have no family to care for them. As for younger widows, it is good for them to remarry and bear children, to avoid sexual sin.

[1 Tim. 5:17-20](#) *Respect and support your elders.* Elders who work full-time in ministry should be highly respected and should be financially supported by their congregations. An accusation against such a leader should not be entertained lightly.

[1 Tim. 5:21-25](#) *Advice on leadership and health.* Paul encouraged Timothy to be impartial in his leadership and to be careful in choosing coleaders ([1 Tim. 5:21-22](#)). Great discernment is needed in judging character ([1 Tim. 5:24-25](#)). Paul also offered some medical advice ([1 Tim. 5:23](#)), which should be viewed as just that and not as a license for social drinking. Apparently the gift of healing was by this time less prevalent than in the church's first days. Paul was not only unable to heal Timothy ([1 Tim. 5:23](#)), he was also unable to heal Trophimus (see [2 Tim. 4:20](#)) and himself (see [2 Cor. 12:7-10](#)).

[1 Tim. 6:1-2](#) *Servants: Free in Christ, bound to their masters.* Though they are free in Christ, bond servants should, for testimony's sake, serve their masters diligently. If their masters were also Christians, they should not let this spiritual equality (see [Galatians 3:28](#)) lessen their respect for them as masters. On slavery, see [Philemon: Background](#).

[1 Tim. 6:3-10](#) *Greed vs. contentment.* Paul warned against false teachers who viewed the gospel as a means of getting rich ([1 Tim. 6:3-5](#)), and warned about the perils of wealth ([1 Tim. 6:6-10](#)). The love

of money brings only grief ([1 Tim. 6:9-10](#)). Contentment is a more logical approach to life and brings great blessing ([1 Tim. 6:6-8](#)).

[1 Tim. 6:11-16](#) *The good fight of faith.* We should flee all that is evil and aggressively pursue all that is good, living in hope of Christ's return, which will bring us eternal life.

[1 Tim. 6:17-19](#) *"If you're wealthy, use it well."* Christians who happen to be wealthy should be careful not to trust in their wealth, focusing instead on using it to help others, thereby "storing up their treasure" (see [Matthew 6:19-21](#); [Matthew 19:16-22](#)).

[1 Tim. 6:20-21](#) *"Finally, in closing . . ."* Paul closed with another urgent exhortation for Timothy: Keep the faith that has been entrusted to you, and don't get caught up in the "so-called knowledge" many are professing—probably another allusion to Gnosticism (see exposition on ^s[1 Tim. 4:1-11](#) and on ^s[Col. 2:4-10](#)).

TIMOTHY

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM 1 TIMOTHY)

Key Fact: Ministry partner and disciple of Paul, who addressed two NT letters to him.

Father: Unnamed ([Acts 16:3](#))

Mother: Eunice

Occupation: Missionary, pastor

Total Bible References: 24

Key References: [1 Tim. 1-6](#); [Acts 16-20](#); [Phil. 2:19-23](#); [1 Thes. 1](#); [1 Thes. 2:3-4](#); [1 Thes. 3:2-6](#); [2 Tim. 1-4](#); [Hebrews 13:23](#)

Timothy Speaks

Thank God Mark and I arrived in time to see Paul before his death. Hopefully we were of some comfort during his final hours. I know from personal experience just how bad prison life is. But he suffered the ultimate injury, being forsaken by many of his closest friends. ([Hebrews 13:23](#); [2 Tim. 4:6, 9-11, 16](#))

No doubt about it, he became the spiritual father I never had. He constantly prayed for me, was aware of my tears, and showed real concern over my health. Most important, he regarded me as a man of God. ([1 Tim. 1:1](#); [1 Tim. 5:23](#); [1 Tim. 6:11](#); [Acts 16:3](#); [2 Tim. 1:3-4](#))

How God used that man, in addition to my grandmother and mother, in shaping my life! But even more vital have been the Holy Scriptures I was taught from my youth. So much has happened since I joined up with Paul there in Lystra. How often have I remembered the special ordination service that followed. ([1 Tim. 4:14](#); [Acts 16:1-3](#); [2 Tim. 1:5-6](#); [2 Tim. 3:15](#))

My prayers go out to the believers in Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, and Berea to whom I have ministered. Of course, my greatest burden is for the saints here in Ephesus, my current post of duty. ([1 Tim. 1:3](#); [Acts 17:14](#); [1 Cor. 4:17](#); [1 Cor. 16:10-11](#); [Phil. 2:19-23](#); [1 Thes. 3:1-2](#))

"Preach the word of God. Be persistent, whether the time is favorable or not." This is the challenge you gave me, beloved Paul. And this is the challenge I plan to keep! ([2 Tim. 4:2](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Timothy

- Though burdened by poor health ([1 Tim. 5:23](#)), Timothy was used by God to faithfully and fruitfully minister to at least five NT churches. Not even physical infirmities can keep us from serving God, if we will only trust him.
- Paul admonished Timothy in 10 key areas that apply to us as well:
 - Be a good soldier for Christ ([1 Tim. 1:18](#); [1 Tim. 6:12](#); [2 Tim. 2:3](#)).
 - Don't neglect your spiritual gifts ([1 Tim. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 1:6](#)).
 - Guard your own spiritual life ([1 Tim. 4:16](#)).
 - Denounce all sin ([1 Tim. 5:20](#)).
 - Be impartial ([1 Tim. 5:21](#)).
 - Pursue righteousness ([1 Tim. 6:11](#)).
 - Give yourself to God's Word ([2 Tim. 2:2, 15](#); [2 Tim. 3:14](#); [2 Tim. 4:2](#)).
 - Flee sexual sin ([2 Tim. 2:22](#)).
 - Be firm but gentle ([2 Tim. 2:24-26](#)).
 - Bring others to Christ ([2 Tim. 4:5](#)).

Key Verses

"I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare. All the others care only for themselves and not for what matters to Jesus Christ. But you know how Timothy has proved himself. Like a son with his father, he has helped me in preaching the Good News" ([Phil. 2:20-22](#)).