

July 9 1st Timothy (80% disputed)

## Intro

The letters to Timothy and Titus make up what are referred to as the “pastoral epistles” because they are written to individuals who are leading congregations (pastors) rather than to the whole congregation. Timothy was the son of a Gentile man and a Jewish mother, who lived in Lystra (Turkey). His mother was a believer and Timothy embraced the Christian faith and was recruited by Paul as a traveling companion. Paul did circumcise Timothy when he became a believer so as not to offend the Jewish Christians whom he had to work with, but Paul later regretted that decision and fought passionately for Gentiles’ full inclusion in the church without needing to be circumcised first. Timothy was sent by Paul to Macedonia to strengthen the Thessalonians, repeatedly to Corinth, to Ephesus, to Rome, and finally to Troas. He was Paul’s right hand man. Timothy was often sent to churches faces crises or difficult situations, and Paul trusted Timothy to handle them. Timothy was also listed as co-author on many of Paul’s undisputed letters. Paul wrote that Timothy was “like a son” to him.

The letters to Timothy assume that Paul left Timothy in charge of the church in Ephesus while he went to Macedonia, Paul is now writing back to Timothy to check up on the church. The problem with this is that there is nothing anywhere else in the New Testament to confirm this part of Paul’s timeline. The only way this possibly could have been true is if Paul did survive his Roman imprisonment and went on to have another missionary career, making it as far West as Spain (as indicated by a letter from Roman bishop Clement to the Corinthian church the end of the first century). This would mean that the traditional dating of Paul’s death (64 CE) is wrong.

Most scholars believe that the pastoral letters are pseudopigraphal, written by third parties at a time when Paul, Timothy, and Titus were all dead and gone, but not forgotten. The letters try to reconstruct what Paul would have said to his famous colleagues if they were all still around, grappling with the issues the church was facing at this later time. These letters were written in the late first century, early second century (80-125 CE). Some scholars believe that these letters could have been later expansions to brief notes Paul did write to Timothy during their lives. Some scholars believe that only 1 Timothy and Titus are pseudopigraphal, while 2 Timothy is authentic Paul.

The pastoral letters all respond to two very real threats in their time and place: violent persecution and heresy. Persecution was accepted as an inevitable consequence for adopting a life of faith at odds with the Roman status quo. But, the church armed itself against heresy in 3 important ways that are addressed in these letters: clergy, creeds, and canon. The pastoral letters address the way the church develops a more controlled administrative structure with recognized leaders to assess and proclaim acceptable teaching (teaching in line with the original truths of the Christian faith). The church also identified core statements of belief and doctrine to help provide a guidepost for assessing heresy. The church finally designated certain writings as authoritative (canonical) to hedge against writings that were controversial (unscriptural). This process of developing the canon was not a perfect process. At this stage in Christianity, the church is becoming more institutional, and thus more authoritarian in an effort to prevent the revision of the faith and teachings for which Paul and others suffered and died.

### Chapter 1

The author begins by urging church leaders to instruct their people to put their time and energy into learning that which is truly faith-forming (rather than occupying their time with myths and legends). The aim of faith formation instruction is love, a good conscience, and sincere faith. The law has a purpose: to curb bad behavior. “Paul”’s former life of bad behavior, conversion, and the grace which is now revealed through his life is an example to people who are presently living in sinful ways to see the transforming power of God’s grace. Conscience is highlighted as important for a life of faith, indeed its development should be a priority for church leaders. Those who do not follow their conscience end up off course, metaphorically shipwrecked.

### Chapter 2

The author first urges prayer for all, especially for political leaders, that their actions may create a world of peace and dignity for all. This chapter is similar to the household codes we’ve read for the last two weeks. Where it says “man” or “woman” those words could also be rendered as “husband” or “wife.” According to this author, the qualities of worship are similar to a respectably run household. Men should pray any and everywhere. Women should dress modestly, rather than drawing attention to themselves and their wealth. Good works should be their crowning glory. This chapter is one of the main passages of scripture that has been used for thousands of

years to denigrate women and their leadership roles within the church. Nothing really can redeem them, though they seem to have been written from a perspective of misogyny that was developing within the church at this time, rather than from the position that Jesus modeled. The real Paul celebrated the contributions, leadership, and teaching of women within the church. In fact, when Paul wrote that women should not wear their hair short (1 Corinthians 11) he was meaning that they shouldn't feel the need to make themselves look like men (with short hair) in order to have the authority to teach, if they're going to preach and teach they should do it proudly as women. As the institutional church is developing around the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, so are the leaders creating rules to keep "good order". These rules were sometimes based on cultural norms rather than faith or scriptural traditions, which is ironic because the church is to be counter-cultural.

### Chapter 3

No one knows exactly what the role of bishop or deacon entailed in the early church, it could have been similar to pastor. This list is similar to the one found in Titus. When it says a bishop must be married only once, this likely meant "to one person at a time" as a polemic against polygamy. The faithful management of a household, and good parenting skills, were seen as necessary qualifications for managing a church and caring for the family of faith. Greed is noted again and again in the epistles as idolatry, leaders of the church are forbidden from being greedy. "Women" in verse 11 may refer to Women Deacons, an accepted role of women's leadership in the church at this time.

### Chapter 4

It seems that there are some in the community who are still trying to tell the church that in order to be holy they must abstain from certain foods. The author reiterates Paul's own teaching that nothing is to be considered unholy, as long as it is received with a thankful heart and prayer. The author urges the church to take on a godliness fitness regimen, which is even more valuable than a fitness regimen for your physical health because it benefits people now and in the life to come. The living God is the Savior of all people, especially those who believe. The author now speaks to Timothy personally, encouraging him not to let people think less of him because of his youth, but to show himself a faithful servant through the quality of his preaching and teaching and living the faith.

## Chapter 5

The order of widows in the early church was an arrangement someone similar to the idea of nuns in a convent: widows would be supported financially by the church and all their needs met and they in turn would devote themselves to prayer and study. However, this arrangement seems to have been taken advantage of by those who did not truly need the support (those who had families still around to take care of them). This is the situation to which this passage applies. The author insists that family members provide care and support for the widows in their own families, and that the order of widows is to be reserved for those widows who truly have no where else to turn but to the church.

## Chapter 6

First of all, Jesus NEVER said anything to condone or endorse slavery. The author is wrong on this point.

Godliness is expressed through contentment. Those who want to be rich fall into temptation, and are often swayed into idolatry (greed=idolatry). Money itself is not evil, but the LOVE of money is the root of all evil. The authors words for the rich is for them not to lord it over others (don't be haughty) and to do good, be generous, and share what they have so that they may take hold of the life that is REALLY life.