

## Bible Overview

# Pastoral Letters

Introduction

1 Timothy

2 Timothy

Titus

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## Introduction

The Pastoral letters are so called because they were written by the Apostle Paul to encourage two of his closest friends in their efforts to help the newly converted Christians in Asia. The letters were probably written not long after the last of his missionary journeys and when Paul was in Rome awaiting trial by Caesar. Paul realised that he was unable to see the new communities himself so he relied on Timothy and Titus to care for these new followers of Christ.

The Letters have common ground. In each case Paul encourages both Timothy and Titus in their personal strength. Paul knew only too well the troubles they would face. The ecclesias (churches) were operating in a very hostile Roman environment. At the same time, many were prone to be influenced by old, Judaising (the Law of Moses) customs. Moral standards in the Roman Empire were very low. This three pronged 'attack' meant that the 'carers' needed to be able to withstand pressures themselves and no how to deal with those who had succumbed to the pressures, and to help those who hadn't to resist the tendency to succumb.

The order in which the letters were written, and their approximate years, are: 1 Timothy AD 67, Titus AD 67 and 2 Timothy AD 68.

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## 1 Timothy

The first letter has three main themes. Paul was aware that it would not be long before **sound doctrine** would be ignored. What he wanted Timothy to stand against was the false doctrine that was being deliberately taught in Ephesus. It was evident that some of the believers in Ephesus were teaching doctrinal error, and were also devoting their time to the consideration of myths, genealogies and meaningless talk. Paul regarded the development of faith in love as being far more productive. It seems from verses 8 to 11 in Chapter 1 that the error being proposed by the false teachers related to the keeping of the Law (of Moses). Paul, yet again (he

did it in other letters) pointed out that the Law was made for sinners. On the other hand, while Paul regarded himself as initially a sinner of significant proportions (v. 13) it was through the grace of God, and through love and faith that he was able to receive strength and be a servant of God. Paul was encouraging Timothy to fight for the faith that he was also given so that he would not follow the path of those who became distracted and made a wreck of their faith (vv 18-20).

The second theme concerned the way in which groups of believers - the ecclesia - might **worship**. He included advice on the way in which men and women might pray and dress, and he also suggested the role of women in relation to man. He made it quite clear that the man should take the responsibility for guidance just as Christ took the responsibility for his ecclesia - his bride as it is termed elsewhere in the Scriptures. Included in Paul's words about worship are descriptions of the work of assistants in the ecclesia, and the 'qualifications' they needed to become involved.

The third theme concerns the issue of **personal traits** that Timothy should exhibit. Paul saw that Timothy had a major role to play in the development of the first century Christians and he did what he could to encourage Timothy. On two other occasions after the first warning in Chapter 1, Paul referred to the acute attacks that would be meted out on the believers before too long. Paul advised him to be a good servant "brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed." "Command and teach" Paul advised, and he realised that it wouldn't be just for a short time, or be easy in any way. He used words such as "fight", "take hold" and "command". Serious issues needed strong words and action.

Two things stand out in the latter part of this letter. Firstly, it was obvious to Paul that Timothy would need to keep Paul's directions "until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14). There was no doubt that Paul expected Jesus to return to the earth. The second thing is that Paul was anticipating a time when "what is falsely called knowledge" would need to be refuted (6:20). For the followers of Christ, "looking for his appearing" should be a fundamental occupation, together with refusal to be caught up in contemporary society's paranoia for increasing knowledge, too much of which can be regarded as being false.

## Outline

- 1:1-2 Greeting
- 1:3-11 The problem of false teachers
- 1:12-20 Grace, faith and love
- 2:1-15 Directions for private and public worship
  - the need for being at peace

- God's desire: salvation for all through Jesus the mediator
  - the roles of men and women in worship
  - 3:1-16 Duties, responsibilities and qualifications of God's servants in the ecclesia
  - 4:1-15 General, personal advice to encourage Timothy
  - 5:1-25 More specific personal advice
  - 6:1-2 Continued advice
  - 6:3-10 A further reminder of troubles - doctrinal, financial and social - that will come to God's people
  - 6:11-20 Final encouragement
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## 2 Timothy

It is estimated that Paul wrote this letter in AD 68, the last year of his life. He had been released from prison in about AD 63 and had gone back to some of the places he had visited earlier. Towards the end of AD 67 he was arrested again and placed in prison back in Rome. This time, because of the increasing persecution of Christians, he was put into a dungeon and was barely able to write the letter. There can be no doubt that God was at work in ensuring that such an important letter was not only written, but was delivered and kept safe for many years until it was placed in the canon of Scripture.

For Paul, the letter was somewhat sad. He had earlier warned Timothy of the troubled times that would eventuate and he was now seeing the results. The sadness was evident in 1:15-18. Everyone in Asia had deserted him, even Phygelus and Hermogenes. They were obviously two people he had respected and had thought were strong in faith. He was surprised that they had left. Paul had high praise for Onesephorus because of the way he searched until he found Paul in prison. Onesephorus would not have been given much help by the Romans authorities to find such a 'lowly' person as Paul.

Once again, however, even in his own parlous state, Paul was concerned for the welfare of his associates in Christ. Right until the last minute (almost literally) of his life, Paul was doing his best to help strengthen Timothy, knowing that he would take the main responsibility of continuing with the work of preaching the gospel. (It is suggested that Paul died not long after the letter was written.)

There are some marvellous little insights into Paul and his warmth in this letter. He was obviously touched by Timothy's upset at their previous departure (1:4) and wanted to see him again because that would bring him great happiness. Paul had so much affection for Timothy.

We see in the same few verses (1:4-7) the importance of family values in the bringing up of children. Paul refers to Timothy's mother and grandmother and their sincere faith. Paul obviously endorsed the principle of a good example in the upbringing of children.

In encouraging Timothy to be "strong in the faith" (2:1) Paul draws attention to the fact that earthly bondage is only temporary. While he was chained like a common criminal for the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ, "God's word is not chained. Therefore I endure everything ...". Paul had before him the hope that "If we endure, we will also reign with him."

As always, Paul gave a lot of practical advice to Timothy. In the last half of Chapter 2 he

- drew attention to the disruption of quarrelling and idle chatter between Christians;
- warned against false teaching and "stupid arguments", and reminded Timothy of God's sure foundation;
- advocated the need for each person to be "a workman approved of God";
- provided, again, the alternative of truth and righteousness to wickedness.

In the last two chapters Paul again refers to the troubled times that will continue. He ends where he began, expressing sorrow at the way in which his friends deserted him. He shows the true characteristic of Christianity by pleading that they not be punished for this. He finishes with an absolute certainty – that in the face of trouble "the Lord stood at my side", surely a great comfort to all who follow Jesus.

## Outline

1:1 – 2 Greeting

1:3 – 7 A personal tribute to Timothy

1: 8 – 12 The Gospel – a pattern of "sound teaching"

1:13 – 16 Contrasts – those who deserted with him who persevered

2:1 – 7 Personal encouragement to Timothy

2:8 – 13 "Remember Jesus Christ"

2:14 – 21 The approved workman

2:22 – 26 Practical advice

3:1 – 9 A tragic picture of "the last days"

3:10 – 17 "All about my teaching"

4:1 – 6 "Preach the word, ... keep your head and endure hardship."

4:8 – 16 Personal observations

4:19 – 22 Final greetings

## Titus

**Author:** Paul

**Time:** A.D. 64

**Summary:** This letter was written by Paul from Rome to Titus whom he had left to care for the churches on the island of Crete. The letter provides Titus with instruction and advice for his conduct in dealing with the believers in Crete.

### Key verses:

"The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say `No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives" (2:11,12).

1. Greetings and introduction 1:1–4
  2. Titus' task 1:5 – 3:15
    - a) Appointing leaders 1:5–16
    - b) What to teach different groups 2:1–15
    - c) Insist that believers do good 3:1–15
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