

1 Timothy Overview

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 (15:36–41)**

Timeline



Author, Date, and Recipient

The apostle Paul probably wrote this letter to Timothy in the mid-60s A.D., during a mission trip not recorded in Scripture. This trip took place after the events described in Acts, between Paul’s first imprisonment and before the apostle’s second prison term and martyrdom under the Roman emperor Nero.

Theme

The letter’s theme is that the gospel leads to practical, visible change in believers’ lives.

The true gospel, in contrast to false teaching, must and will always lead to godliness.

Purpose

Paul wrote 1 Timothy to advise his coworker Timothy about issues in the church in Ephesus.

Paul has left Timothy in the city of Ephesus to stop some false teachers who had taken leadership roles in the churches there (v. 3). Their teaching apparently involved incorrect assumptions about the law (1:7–11) and not allowing marriage and certain foods (4:1–5). Paul’s real concern is with the results of the false teaching. For example, it promotes mere theories over solid truth (1:4; 6:4). It also leads to arrogance (6:4) and greed (6:5–10). Paul focuses on the fact that true

Christianity is shown in lifestyles shaped by the gospel. Those whose lives are not shaped by the gospel have turned away from the faith (1:6, 19–20; 4:1; 5:6, 8, 11–12, 15; 6:9–10)

Outline

1. Greeting (1:1–2)
2. Confronting the False Teaching (1:3–20)
3. Descriptions of Gospel-shaped Living (2:1–3:13)
4. Purpose of Writing: Behavior in the Church (3:14–16)
5. Identifying the False Teaching (4:1–5)
6. How Timothy Should Be Shaped by the Gospel (4:6–16)
7. How Specific Groups in the Church Should Be Shaped by the Gospel (5:1–6:2a)
8. Confronting the False Teaching Again (6:2b–21)

Key Themes

1. The gospel produces holiness in the lives of believers. There is no legitimate separation between belief and behavior. Thus, those who profess faith but show no progress in godliness should question their spiritual health (1:5; 2:8–15; 3:1–16; 4:6–16; 5:4–6, 8; 6:3–5, 11–14, 18–19).
2. Worldwide evangelism is essential. It is rooted in God's own evangelistic desire (1:15; 2:1–7; 3:16; 4:10).
3. One key evidence of receiving the gospel is proper behavior in corporate worship, in matters like evangelistic prayer, unity, modesty, and submission (2:1–15).
4. Church leaders should be people whose lives are shaped by the gospel (3:1–13; 4:6–16).
5. Appropriate honour is a key element in how Christians should relate to one another in the church (5:1–6:2).
6. Everything God created is good. It is to be appreciated, but not worshiped (4:4–5; 6:17–19).
7. It is important to protect the purity of the gospel (1:3–7, 18–20; 4:6–16; 6:2b–3, 12, 20–21).

Who Was Paul?

The Apostle Paul

Paul was actually born as Saul. He was born in Tarsus in Cilicia around AD 1–5 in a province in the southeastern corner of modern-day Tarsous, Turkey. He was of Benjamite lineage and Hebrew ancestry (Philippians 3:5–6). His parents were Pharisees—fervent Jewish nationalists who adhered strictly to the Law of Moses—who sought to protect their children from “contamination” from the Gentiles. Anything Greek would have been despised in Saul’s household, yet he could speak Greek and Latin. His household would have spoken Aramaic, a derivative of Hebrew, which was the official language of Judea. Saul’s family were Roman citizens but viewed Jerusalem as a truly sacred and holy city (Acts 22:22-29).

At age thirteen Saul would have been sent to Judea where he learned from a rabbi named Gamaliel, under whom Saul mastered Jewish history, the Psalms, and the works of the prophets. His education would continue for five or six years as Saul learned such things as dissecting Scripture (Acts 22:3). It was during this time that he developed a question-and-answer style of teaching known in ancient times as “diatribe.” This method of articulation helped rabbis debate the finer points of Jewish law to either defend or prosecute those who broke the law. Saul went on to become a lawyer, and all signs pointed to his becoming a member of the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court of 71 men who ruled over Jewish life and religion. Saul was zealous for his faith, and this faith did not allow for compromise. It is this zeal that led Saul down the path of religious extremism.

In Acts 5:27–42, Peter delivered his defense of the gospel and of Jesus in front of the Sanhedrin, which Saul would have heard. Gamaliel was also present and delivered a message to calm the council and prevent them from stoning Peter. Saul might also have been present at the trial of Stephen. He was present for his stoning and death; he held the garments of those who did the stoning (Acts 7:58). After Stephen’s death, “a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem” (Acts 8:1). Saul became determined to eradicate Christians, ruthless in his pursuit as he believed he was acting in the name of God. Arguably, there is no one more frightening or more vicious than a religious terrorist, especially when he believes he is doing the will of the Lord by killing innocent people. This is exactly what Saul of Tarsus was: a religious terrorist. Acts 8:3 states, “He began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.”

The pivotal passage in Paul’s story is Acts 9:1–22, which recounts Paul’s meeting with Jesus Christ on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus, a journey of about 150 miles. Saul was angered by what he had seen and filled with murderous rage against the Christians. Before departing on his journey, he had asked the high priest for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, asking for permission to bring any Christians (followers of “the Way,” as they were known) back to Jerusalem to imprison them. On the road Saul was caught in a bright light from heaven that caused him to fall face down on the ground. He heard the words, “Saul, Saul, why

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are you persecuting me?” He replied, “Who are you Lord?” Jesus answered directly and clearly, “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (verses 4–5). As an aside, this might not have been Saul’s first encounter with Jesus, as some scholars suggest that young Saul might have known of Jesus and that he might have actually witnessed His death.

From that moment on, Saul’s life was turned upside down. The light of the Lord blinded him, and as he traveled on he had to rely on his companions. As instructed by Jesus, Saul continued to Damascus to make contact with a man named Ananias, who was hesitant at first to meet Saul because he knew Saul’s reputation as an evil man. But the Lord told Ananias that Saul was a “chosen instrument” to carry His name before the Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel (Acts 9:15) and would suffer for doing so (Acts 9:16). Ananias followed the Lord’s instructions and found Saul, on whom he laid hands, and told him of his vision of Jesus Christ. Through prayer, Saul received the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), regained his sight, and was baptized (Acts 9:18). Saul immediately went into the synagogues and proclaimed Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:20). The people were amazed and skeptical, as Saul’s reputation was well known. The Jews thought he had come to take away the Christians (Acts 9:21), but he had in fact joined them. Saul’s boldness increased as the Jews living in Damascus were confounded by Saul’s arguments proving that Jesus was the Christ (Acts 9:22).

Saul spent time in Arabia, Damascus, Jerusalem, Syria, and his native Cilicia, and Barnabas enlisted his help to teach those in the church in Antioch (Acts 11:25). Interestingly, the Christians driven out of Judea by the persecution that arose after Stephen’s death founded this multiracial church (Acts 11:19–21).

Saul took his first of three missionary journeys in the late AD 40s. As he spent more time in Gentile areas, Saul began to go by his Roman name Paul (Acts 13:9). Paul wrote many of the New Testament books. Most theologians are in agreement that he wrote Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus. These thirteen “letters” (epistles) make up the “Pauline Authorship” and are the primary source of his theology. As previously noted, the book of Acts gives us a historical look at Paul’s life and times. The apostle Paul spent his life proclaiming the risen Christ Jesus throughout the Roman world, often at great personal peril (2 Corinthians 11:24–27). It is assumed that Paul died a martyr’s death in the mid-to-late AD 60s in Rome.

truth" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)). This advice is crucial for all Christians. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" ([2 Timothy 3:16–17](#)). Paul counseled Timothy, his "dear son" ([2 Timothy 1:2](#)), from a heart of love, wanting Timothy to stand firm in his own faith and to lead the other believers well. Timothy certainly seems to have been faithful; we should follow his example.

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Who Was Timothy?

Timothy, the recipient of the two New Testament letters bearing his name, was the son of a Greek father and a Jewish mother. He joined Paul during one of Paul's later missionary journeys. Paul addresses Timothy as "my true son in the faith" ([1 Timothy 1:2](#)). He was probably no older than late teens/early twenties when he joined Paul but had already distinguished himself as faithful, and the elders noticed him. He probably heard and responded to the gospel when Paul came through the area of Derbe and Lystra on his first missionary journey, but we don't know for sure. Timothy served as Paul's representative to several churches ([1 Corinthians 4:17](#); [Philippians 2:19](#)), and he was later a pastor in Ephesus ([1 Timothy 1:3](#)). Timothy is also mentioned as being with Paul when Paul wrote several New Testament letters—2 Corinthians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.

Paul says Timothy had a "genuine faith," the same as that which lived in his mother and grandmother ([2 Timothy 1:1–5](#)). Eunice and Lois prepared Timothy's heart to accept Christ by teaching Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures and preparing him "from infancy" to recognize the Messiah when He appeared ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)). When Paul came preaching Christ, all three accepted his teaching and committed their lives to the Savior. We, too, must prepare our children to be ready when Christ moves in their hearts. They must know how to recognize that pull on their spirits as coming from the Savior, and the only way to do that is to follow the example of Eunice and Lois and teach our children the Word of God.

In Paul's first letter to Timothy, he gave him instructions and advice for leading the church. He also exhorted Timothy not to let others look down upon him due to his youth, but to set an example for other believers "in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity" ([1 Timothy 4:12](#)). Paul told Timothy to be devoted to reading Scripture, exhorting, and teaching, and to not neglect the gift that he had been given. Paul also counseled Timothy to keep a close watch on himself. These instructions remain pertinent to believers today. We, too, are called to "pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses" ([1 Timothy 6:11–12](#)).

It seems that Timothy had a chronic illness that required some attention ([1 Timothy 5:23](#)). Paul counseled him on a change of diet to aid the relief of his condition. From

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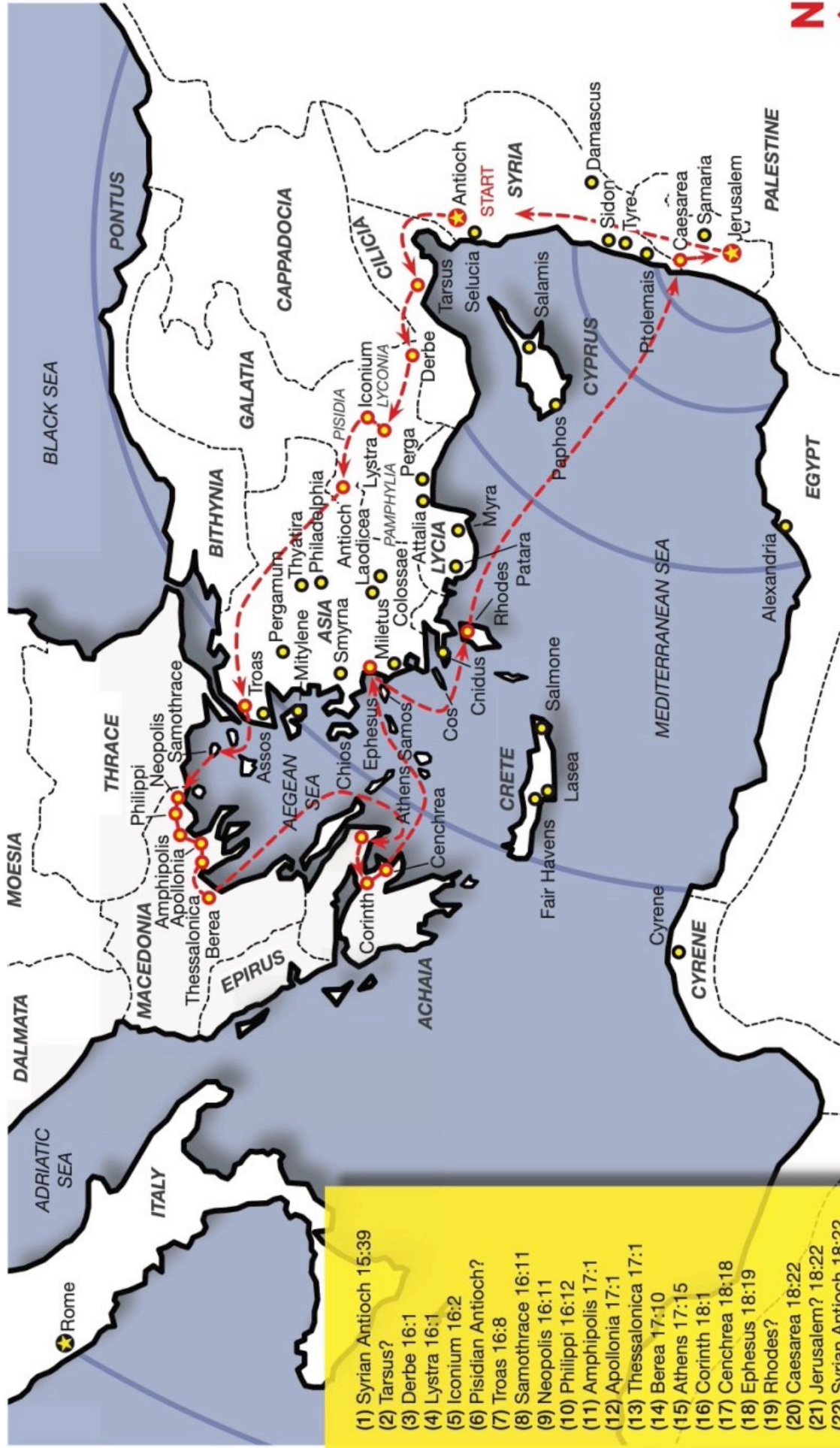
this example we learn that it is not always God's will to heal a person miraculously; sometimes, healing comes through more "natural" means, if it comes at all.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul warned Timothy about the false teachers that he would encounter and tells him to continue in the things he has learned because he knows the character of those he learned them from, namely Paul himself and his mother and grandmother ([2 Timothy 3:14–15](#)). The truths Timothy was taught from infancy—truths about sin and our need for a Savior—were able to make him “wise for salvation” ([2 Timothy 3:15](#)). As parents, we are to prepare our children to distinguish truth from error. And as believers, we are to stand firm in the truth we have learned, not being surprised or swayed by opposition and false teachers.

Paul also told Timothy, to "do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" ([2 Timothy 2:15](#)). This advice is crucial for all Christians. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" ([2 Timothy 3:16–17](#)). Paul counseled Timothy, his "dear son" ([2 Timothy 1:2](#)), from a heart of love, wanting Timothy to stand firm in his own faith and to lead the other believers well. Timothy certainly seems to have been faithful; we should follow his example.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSION ACTS 15:39 - 18:22 AD 49-52

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- (1) Syrian Antioch 15:39
- (2) Tarsus?
- (3) Derbe 16:1
- (4) Lystra 16:1
- (5) Iconium 16:2
- (6) Pisidian Antioch?
- (7) Troas 16:8
- (8) Samothrace 16:11
- (9) Neopolis 16:11
- (10) Philippi 16:12
- (11) Amphipolis 17:1
- (12) Apollonia 17:1
- (13) Thessalonica 17:1
- (14) Berea 17:10
- (15) Athens 17:15
- (16) Corinth 18:1
- (17) Cenchrea 18:18
- (18) Ephesus 18:19
- (19) Rhodes?
- (20) Caesarea 18:22
- (21) Jerusalem? 18:22
- (22) Syrian Antioch 18:22



