

An Introduction to 1 & 2 Timothy

Introduction

a. objectives

1. subject – an introduction to the books of 1 & 2 Timothy focusing on their importance to believers
2. aim – to cause us to know how to behave in the household of God, the pillar and buttress of truth
3. passage – 1 Timothy 3:14-15

b. outline

1. The Background of the Letters
2. The Purpose of the Letters
3. The Value of the Letters

c. opening

1. the reasons for **these letters** as a new series
 - a. a choice to preach two books that I have had little *connection to* from the pulpit
 1. I have preached through 1 Timothy, but only very *quickly* and a *long time ago* (2001?)
 2. and, I have never preached through 2 Timothy *systematically*, nor from any *individual* passages
 3. **note:** it is my custom to preach “new” works (for me) because my ultimate goal is to preach “*the whole counsel of God*” – and not just repeat works that I’m “comfortable” with
 - a. and, I’m going to try to avoid preaching through books that have been *recently* covered
 - b. a choice to combine two books that are *similar*, yet *different* (**see below**)
 1. both letters were written by the same apostle, to the same man (and church), fairly close together in time, and in a similar *historical reality* and *application* to the life of the early church
 2. therefore, although their “feeling” is different, they can be “combined” into a single sermon series as **the instructions of an apostle to his favorite protégé**
2. the reasons for an **introduction sermon** at the beginning of a new series
 - a. to establish a sense of what we will be *discovering* as we travel through these letters
 - b. so, we must start with *context* – because “a *text* without a *context* is a *pretext* for a *prooftext*”
 - c. including: *background* = the world behind and around these letters; *purpose* = why these letters were written; *value* = what these letters will mean *to us* as we study them

I. The Background of the Letters

Content

a. the nature of these letters

1. their grouping – these are *pastoral* letters (with two (2) different definitions)
 - a. pastoral = a set of letters written to men who were in *pastoral leadership*
 1. **i.e.** men who were in leadership (of some sort) in the church (**see below**)
 2. these men include **Timothy**, **Titus** (a church leadership consultant on the isle of Crete), and **Philemon** (a pastor of a house church near Ephesus or Colossae)
 3. **note:** Philemon can also be included in the Prison Epistles, having been written by Paul during his first incarceration in Rome (along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians)
 - b. pastoral = written with a *pastoral intention* – to guide these men (and their churches)
 1. **i.e.** as correspondence designed to *help* and *guide* each of these men as *they* attempted to do the work of leading their own people; **shepherding the shepherds** (**see below**)
2. their authorship – the apostle Paul (**1:1 in both**)
 - a. many *modern* scholars dismiss Pauline authorship of the Pastorals
 1. because of a) differences in style, b) content, and c) lack of precedent in Acts (**i.e.** offices)
 - b. however, church tradition has held Pauline authorship since as early as the 2nd C.
 1. **i.e.** differences in style and content do not *prove* different authorship, just different *timing*
 1. **e.g.** *personal* letters would always have a different style than *corporate* correspondence
 2. **e.g.** the specific instruction re: elders & deacons (**1 Tim. 3**) is *clearly* with precedent in the early church (**i.e. Acts 6, 20**) – by the time of *this* letter, those offices would have been fully established in the church and Paul could *now* write details relating to them
3. their dating – c. 63-64AD / c. 66-67AD (Titus c. 64-65AD)
 - a. since the situation of 1 & 2 Timothy doesn’t fit into the narrative of Acts, it would seem:

1. Paul was released from the Acts imprisonment (c. 62AD), traveled *back* through Asia Minor and made a trip to Crete (c. 62-64AD), wrote 1 Timothy (c. 64AD), Titus (c. 65AD), 2 Timothy (c. 66AD), and was martyred under the persecution of Nero (c. 67AD)
2. the similarity in style and content of Titus to 2 Timothy suggests both were written near the end of Paul's life (**e.g.** he anticipates his death in **2 Tim. 4:6**)

b. the audience of the letters

1. to Timothy – Paul's young friend, co-worker, and protégé in the Gospel (**1:2 in both**)
 - a. Timothy's mother Eunice was a Jew, his father a Greek; he was raised in a "mixed" household
 1. he was not circumcised as a child, but was by Paul before the second missionary journey
 - b. Timothy was a native of Lystra, converted by Paul on his first missionary journey into the city
 1. he joined Paul on his second missionary journey back through Asia Minor
 2. he was well thought-of by the church after his conversion (which was why Paul chose him)
 - c. Timothy served Paul faithfully, and was sent on a number of crucial missions to represent Paul
 1. **e.g.** to Corinth, to Philippi, in Athens, to Macedonia/Thessalonica, and (**now**) to **Ephesus**
 2. Paul considered "*no one to be like him*" in terms of his service and compassion (**Phil. 2:20**)
 - d. Timothy is listed as a co-author of six (6) of Paul's letters (2 Cor., Phil., Col., 1 & 2 Thess., Philem.)
 1. **IMO:** he could have been a "consultant" on Ephesians, given its similarity to Colossians

c. the context of the letters

1. to the church at Ephesus – Paul writes "through" Timothy to this significant N.T. church (**1 Tim. 1:3**)
 - a. it is obvious that the letters are **highly personal**, esp. 2 Timothy (as Paul anticipates his death)
 - b. yet, the letters become accepted *Scripture*, as they are read, copied, and transferred
 1. Timothy must have shared these letters with the elders of the church at Ephesus, given the subject matter and how they deal with various church issues
 2. the letters (then) would become more widely known, even to point of being copied and transferred to *other* churches for their edification and instruction
 3. the widespread nature of the letters would (eventually then) lead to them being recognized as Scripture and included in the early canon, along with Paul's other letters in circulation
 - c. therefore, the audience of these letters is Timothy, but the church (**i.e.** other believers) is clearly in the foreground of Paul's thinking as he writes (**IOW:** Paul writes to the church *through* Timothy)
2. **question:** what *role* does Timothy have at Ephesus – is he the pastor (preaching elder) of the church?
 - a. many assume that since Timothy is told to "*preach the word ... in season and out of season*" (**2 Tim. 4:2**) that he must have been the preaching elder (pastor) of this church
 1. **BTW:** that assumption demonstrates the oft error of assuming what "pastor" really means
 - b. however, Timothy was left in Ephesus by Paul (**1 Tim. 1:3**) when he carried on with his "4th journey"
 1. the implication being that Paul had returned to Ephesus for some "continuing instruction"
 2. and, Timothy was (now) being left behind to finish the work Paul had started
 - c. thus, Timothy could best be described as a "liaison" to *implement* what Paul had taught while there
 1. true, Timothy would preach, but his *primary* task would be to fulfill Paul's charge of focus

II. The Purpose of the Letters

Content

a. the structure of 1 Timothy

1. **note:** at this point, we will "split off" to 1 Timothy (our immediate context) and come back to 2 Timothy
 - a. the key points of 1 Timothy will simply become more **personal** in the second letter as Paul urges his young protégé to continue doing what he instructs here, even in the face of **persecution**
2. there is an **indicative–imperative** structure to 1 Timothy
 - a. the indicative appears quickly in **chap. 1**, then the imperatives follow in **chaps. 2-6**
 - b. Paul quickly "*charges*" Timothy to a specific doctrinal truth (**1:5,18**), then begins a lengthy exhortation on implementing that charge

b. the charge of 1 Timothy (read 1 Tim. 3:14-15)

1. Paul specifically notes *why* he has written: Timothy, carry out *my mission there*, until I get back
 - a. **IOW** (based on **1 Timothy 1:5,18**): do *what I would do there* in terms of guiding the church
2. **a common assertion:** that 1 Timothy was written as a guide to *the proper order of the church* "*the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth*"
 - a. **i.e.** how Timothy was to go about building a proper church – what a "healthy" church looks like in terms of programs, leadership, worship style, ministries, fellowship, etc.

- b. **e.g.** programs (chap. 2) = how the church operates in regards to the world around it; leadership (chap. 3) = elders and deacons; worship (chap. 4) = preaching, Scripture reading, etc.; ministries (chap. 5) = member care to widows, the care and feeding of pastors; fellowship (chap. 6) = members “getting along” and using their resources (money) wisely
- c. **IOW:** the assertion that Paul was writing to his protégé to instruct him on “growing” the church by making sure that it was *operating properly* in all of these areas
 - 1. true, there is valuable instruction in all of this, but it is all *subtext* for a much bigger issue
- 3. **a better assertion:** that 1 Timothy was written as a charge for *practical, visible change in the lives of those who believe the gospel*
 - “... if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God ...”
 - a. in **Ephesians**, Paul defines the divine nature of the church itself; in **1 Timothy**, Paul extends this teaching into its *practical ramification* – how are members of the church to *behave*?
 - b. note the number of times Paul refers to doctrine, teaching, or knowledge (**1:3, 7, 10; 2:4, 7; 3:2; 4:2, 6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1-3, 20 [16 or more verses]**)
 - c. Paul charges Timothy to root out anything (or anyone) that is inconsistent with the true teachings of Christ, because *false teaching always leads away from godliness*
 - 1. **false teachers are the primary occasion for the letter** – their “infiltration” of the church has the potential to lead the sheep away from the central message of the Gospel
 - d. **the true gospel, in contrast to false teaching, will always lead to godliness in its adherents**

III. The Value of the Letters

Content

a. the value of 1 Timothy

- 1. all of the areas of the book mentioned **above** are designed as instruction to this end:
 - 1. chap. 1 – the charge to Timothy which is the basis of a pursuit of godliness
 - 2. chap. 2 – prayer for the church to be left alone by the world to pursue godliness
 - 3. chap. 3 – the implementation of good leadership to lead the church to pursue godliness
 - 4. chap. 4 – proper worship as a central means within the pursuit of godliness
 - 5. chap. 5 – the pursuit of godliness permeating every aspect of ministry within the church
 - 6. chap. 6 – using every resource at our disposal to hold fast sound doctrine and godliness of life
 - 7. 2 Timothy will continue the charge of Paul, but at a much more *personal* level
- 2. **1 & 2 Timothy are letters to the church at Ephesus, through Timothy, in which Paul commands believers to pursue a life of godliness – a life dedicated to the real purpose of the Gospel**