

Notes on 1 Timothy

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Introduction

- Of Paul's 13 preserved letters, only 1-2 Timothy and Titus were written to co-workers
 - They are certainly personal but also professional
 - They include instructions for the men but also for the churches they are managing
- Timothy and Titus were NOT pastors
 - They were apostles / apostolic representatives in their respective locations (Ephesus and Crete) when Paul was working elsewhere
 - They were to establish and/or fix the local churches and make sure qualified men were appointed as leaders
 - So, it is not accurate to call them "Pastoral Epistles"
- The three letters have only 3,488 words; however:
 - 90 imperatives (43, 33, 14) – direct commands (2.5%)
 - "faith, faithful" – 50x
 - "teaching" and "truth" – 29x together
 - "grace" – 13x
 - "godliness" – 15x in the NT; 10x in these letters
 - "savior" – 10x
- There is some debate on **who** wrote them and when
 - In the early 19th century, German scholars began to question Paul's authorship, even though it was well-established in the early church
 - Conservative scholars in the 20th century began to reinstate the historical position that Paul wrote them
- There is some debate on who wrote them and **when**
 - The traditional conservative view is that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus after his Roman imprisonment in Acts 28 (AD 60–62) and 2 Timothy during his final imprisonment in AD 66
 - It seems 1 Timothy was much earlier (maybe AD 55); Titus may have been as well (no mention of Titus or ministry on Crete in Acts)

- Paul left Timothy in Ephesus when he went to Macedonia, thinking he would return shortly (Acts 19:21-22; 20:1)
- Timothy was still young; this may have been his first solo assignment
- Unlike Titus, Timothy was not establishing elders or starting the church but continuing Paul's teaching and fighting false doctrine that was creeping in (Acts 20:28-30)

1 Timothy 1:1–2

- Timothy got his authority from Paul, and Paul regularly opened his letters using that title/role
- Jesus called “our hope”
- “genuine child, true son”
- Only the two letters to Timothy include “mercy” in the greetings; all the others are just “grace and peace”
- Who was Timothy?

1 Timothy 1:3–4

- One of Timothy's primary responsibilities was to refute false doctrine and useless teachings (“myths and endless genealogies”) and prevent people from teaching it
- One of the major purposes in writing this letter; the other is in 3:14-15

1 Timothy 1:5–7

- The goal of the instruction Timothy was to present (vs 3) was love based in three areas:
 - a pure heart
 - a good conscience
 - faith without hypocrisy

1 Timothy 1:8–11

- The problem was not with the Mosaic Law
- The Law itself is good when someone uses it correctly
- The purpose of the Law was/is to point out sin and sinfulness

- Gentiles were never under the Mosaic Law, so we have to be careful in using that Law to convict people

1 Timothy 1:12–14

- Why was his ministry a big deal to Paul? Because of his former lifestyle
- He saw God as merciful toward him since Paul didn't really understand what he was doing before he believed in Jesus
- It was God's grace that super-abounded with Christ's faithfulness and love toward Paul

1 Timothy 1:15

- There are several "faithful sayings" in these letters (3 in 1 Timothy, one each in 2 Timothy and Titus): *"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"*
- Because of his former lifestyle, and overwhelmed by Christ's mercy, Paul made the claim that he was the "first" or worst

1 Timothy 1:16

- Once again Paul invokes Christ's mercy; this time the purpose of the mercy was so that Paul could serve as a kind of prototype of those who would believe in Christ after him

1 Timothy 1:17

- Reflecting on God's overwhelming mercy, Paul broke into a doxology; he described God as:
 - king of the ages; eternal king
 - immortal, imperishable
 - invisible
 - only

1 Timothy 1:18–20

- Paul returns to his instructions for Timothy, once again referring to him as his child
- Someone had spoken prophecies over Timothy, and Paul wanted him to live out his calling

- Rejecting this healthy doctrine can lead to a shipwrecked faith, an appropriate visual for a port city like Ephesus

1 Timothy 2:1–2

- Paul’s urge for Timothy to pray as follows is fronted by “First of all”
- How do we make sure that our church, our members, don’t fall away and reject healthy doctrine? We pray
- Did Hymeneus and Alexander fall away in part because of persecution or some other outside influence prompting this discourse?
- The purpose and expected result was that the believers in Ephesus would be able to experience peaceful and quiet lives specifically characterized by godliness and dignity

1 Timothy 2:3–4

- The more freedom believers have to live out godliness, the more impact they should be able to have on their communities
- This will fulfill God’s “desire” for “all people” to come into the full knowledge of the truth
- *epignosis* is the same word Peter uses to tell us that pursuing Jesus is our highest goal; Paul indicates that this is God’s goal for all people

1 Timothy 2:5–6

- Possibly an early creed that the Ephesians would know
 - one God
 - one mediator between God and humanity
- This mediator is a human but also appointed by God for this role; notice the emphasis on his humanity rather than his deity
- Jesus is specifically suited for this mediatorial role because of his voluntary substitutionary sacrifice
- His sacrifice is a testimony which took place at just the right time; what kind of testimony?
 - of God’s love (Romans 5:8; John 3:16)
 - of God’s plan (Galatians 4:4)
- Is “ransom” as used in modern English the best word?

- Only occurrence of this word (*antilutron*) in the NT; *lutron* in Matt 20:28; Mark 10:45
- From *luō*, “to loose”; *lutroō* usually translated “redeem”; “to liberate from an oppressive situation”

1 Timothy 2:7

- Paul was “placed, appointed” to be a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of Gentiles specifically because of God’s evangelistic and discipleship desire
- This work was to be done in faith and truth

1 Timothy 2:8

- Begins a long section (most of the letter) of specific instructions for several groups within the church
- “Therefore” makes a connection between the beginning general verses about prayer and the following specific instructions
- What are “the men” praying for? Verses 1–2
- To be effective, these prayers required two things:
 - holy hands - men who were in right fellowship with God
 - without anger and arguing
- This seems to show that public prayer requires a right relationship with both God and people

1 Timothy 2:9–10

- “Likewise” is used 6x in these three letters to compare one group/thing to another (4x in 1 Tim; 2x in Titus)
- Only use of *katastolē* in the NT; in ancient Greek it had the idea of “restraint”; when used with clothing and adornment it can mean “modesty, not outlandish”
- “Adorn” is a great word because it’s the same root as *kosmos*, often translated “world” but can refer specifically to the ordered arrangement of the world, universe
 - It’s the basis of our word “cosmetic,” the arranging or beautifying of a person
- Paul’s instructions are toward a quiet life characterized by godliness, against those who would be loud, obnoxious, and flashy
 - There is a right way to live and a wrong way to live and each way has its results and consequences.

- A quiet life of good works goes much further in your family, work, and neighborhood than loud and obnoxious (1 Thess 4:9-12)

1 Timothy 2:11–15

- This is a highly debated and misunderstood passage, but when kept in its context and handled carefully, it turns out to be good
 - *manthenteō* - “to learn” frames and gives the boundaries of the passage; Paul is specifically talking about congregational teaching sessions
 - *hēsuchia* - while “silence” may be a result, the bigger concept is “quietness, without disturbance”; in context, it could be extended to “respectful”
 - *hypoitagē* - “the state of submissiveness”; it’s the willful placing of oneself under the authority of someone else rather than pushing oneself into the lead
- Paul did not allow/permit a woman to do two things during these teaching sessions:
 - to teach
 - to have power or authority over a man/husband
- During these sessions, she is to remain quiet and not disturb the lesson
- This is not cultural! Paul used two examples from Adam and Eve - one related to the nature of creation and both before sin
 - This prohibition is not a result of sin, not part of the curse
 - It has always been God’s design for men to teach/instruct, especially our wives/families; Eve was not present when God gave Adam the law of the garden
 - There is also a personality issue where women tend to be more trusting than men, which when taken advantage of, makes them more easily deceived and susceptible to fall away from the truth (1 Tim 5:11-15; 2 Tim 3:6-7).
 - This is his second reason
- Verse 15 is pretty simple when we recognize two things:
 - The context is Genesis 3, not 1 Timothy 2
 - Paul intentionally moved from singular to plural to make his point
- Eve’s curse/consequence for leading her husband away from God was a new inherent conflict in husband/wife (and possibly man/woman) relationships; she will seek to lead (often through manipulation), but he will dominate (when not choosing passivity)
- Although Eve’s curse is on all women, “she” can be delivered from that curse through her children if “they” will simply live as they are supposed to as growing disciples.
- Eve’s curse is not a foregone conclusion. It doesn’t have to be that way.

1 Timothy 3:1

- Another “faithful saying” to shift from all men and women to two church offices – elders and deacons:
- “If someone aspires to oversee, he desires a good work.”
- Notice that Paul encouraged people to want to be an overseer in the church
- Elders and their work are described here; Titus 1:5–9; Acts 20:28–31; and 1 Peter 5:1–4
 - Acts 20:28–31
 - Elders are overseers and shepherds
 - A main priority is protecting the flock from false doctrine
 - 1 Peter 5:1–4
 - Shepherd and oversee according to God’s direction
 - Not for the money
 - Do not lord over the people, but be examples
 - The flock is entrusted to them

1 Timothy 3:2–7

- Because it is a “good work” and something that needs to be aspired to, there are certain character traits that the person must have:
- *anepilēptos* - “irreproachable, without fault”
- *mias gynaikos andra* - “one woman man”
- *nēphalion* - “sober, self-controlled” with regard to drinking alcohol
- *sōphrona* - “thoughtful, self-controlled”
- *kosmion* - “well-ordered, respectable, honorable, appropriate”
- *philoxenon* - “hospitable”
- *didaktikon* - “skillful in teaching”
- *mē paroinon* - “not addicted to wine”
- *mē plēkthē* - “not a bully”
- *all’ epieikē amachon philarguron* - “but kind/gentle, peaceable, not a lover of money”
 - These three are to be traits of all believers

- Titus 3:2 - kind and peaceable; Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10 - don't love money
- "Managing his own home well"
 - The three following phrases help explain what this means and why it is important in this context
 - Holding his children in a state of submission to his leadership
 - With all dignity
 - If he can't lead his home, how can he lead a congregation?
- What about men who aren't married or don't have children? Can they be elders?
- *mē neophyton* – "not newly planted"; probably a new believer
 - Warning: he may fall into the condemnation of the devil
 - How? He could become conceited in his new position
- "it is also necessary to have a good testimony from the outsiders"
 - Warning #1: He could fall into disgrace (presumably with the outsiders); the church would suffer this as well
 - Warning #2: He could also fall into "the devil's trap"

1 Timothy 3:8–10, 12–13

- Paul shifts his attention from elders to deacons / ministers
- *diakonos* – although it's where we get our word "deacon," it simply means "server, minister"
- Deacons serve the local congregation by ministering to the people under the direction of the elders/overseers
- "Likewise" deacons have necessary character traits
 - "dignified"
 - "two messages"; not double-tongued or two-faced with people
 - "not devoted to much wine"
 - "not shamelessly greedy"
 - "holding to the mystery of the faith with a clean conscience"
 - Could be a summary of the previous statements, just the last one, or a trait on its own
 - Although they don't necessarily have to be teachers, deacons are to have a firm grasp on the mystery of the faith (healthy doctrine) with a clean conscience

- Before being appointed as deacons, these men must be examined/tested first and found blameless
- “one-woman men”
- “managing their children well and their own homes”
- If deacons serve well, they will receive:
 - a high rank (honorable position) for themselves (possibly within the church)
 - much confidence based on their faith in Christ

1 Timothy 3:11

- There is a great deal of debate as to who these women are. It seems the two obvious options are female deacons (deaconesses) or deacons’ wives.
- “Likewise” seems to separate these women from the deacons like the deacons are distinct from the elders (vs 8)
- “A woman cannot be a one-woman man, so these women are the deacons’ wives.”
- “But why do deacons’ wives need certain character traits but not elders’ wives?”
- Maybe there is a third option
- Whoever they are, they require certain character traits as well:
 - “worthy of respect, dignified”
 - *mē diabolos* - “not slanderous”
 - “sober”
 - “faithful in everything”

1 Timothy 3:14–16

- While he expected Timothy to carry out his instructions, Paul did not plan to leave Timothy alone there
- Second purpose of the letter: Timothy’s growth and the church’s growth
- There is certain way that God expects the church and its leaders to conduct themselves
 - “undeniably great is the mystery of godliness”
 - revealed in flesh
 - vindicated by the Spirit
 - seen by angels

- preached among the nations
- believed in the world/universe
- taken up in glory

1 Timothy 4:1–5

- The doctrine presented in the hymn at the end of chapter three is true, but not everyone will accept or teach it
- In the last times some will depart from the faith
 - They must be connected to the faith at some level. You cannot leave something you are not part of.
 - Rather than holding to the faith they will embrace deceitful spirits and demonic teaching
 - They will promote lies in hypocrisy
- Two specific false teachings that will be prevalent:
 - Forbidding people to marry
 - Abstaining from certain foods
- God created these foods for believers to partake with thanksgiving
- Those who teach otherwise are teaching lies

1 Timothy 4:6–8

- This false teaching in Ephesus needed to be contradicted
- Timothy was to present these truths, laying them out in front of the brothers for their instruction (and presumably, their examination)
- If he did this, he would be considered a good servant/minister of Christ Jesus
- In addition to refuting false teaching and promoting healthy doctrine, Paul commanded Timothy to reject myths
 - *bebēlos* - “worthless, pointless”
 - *graōdēs* - “characteristic of an old woman”; they are the types of things that old women gossip about or tell stories when they get together
- Timothy’s training was to be in godliness
- *gymnazō* - the root of our word “gymnasium, training center”
- Paul expected that he could train himself based on the instruction he had already received from his mother and grandmother, his church in Galatia, and Paul

- Paul’s explanation has a positive/negative contrast:
 - From the literal meaning of *gymnazō*, Paul said that physical training provides only a little benefit
 - However, the result of training in godliness benefits all areas since it holds promise for both this life and the next

1 Timothy 4:9–10

- Paul’s third “faithful saying” is in verse 8:

“Physical training is beneficial for some things, but godliness is beneficial for all things holding promise of life now and to come.”
- Paul and his team labored and struggled to promote healthy doctrine and training in godliness
 - Because they had placed their hope in the living God
 - Because he is the savior of all people, but especially believers
 - Because it is hard work to present healthy doctrine in a world that doesn’t want it and to people who are easily distracted

1 Timothy 4:11–16

- From 1 Timothy 1:1 to 4:10 (61 verses, 841 words), there are six imperative verbs (direct commands)
- From 1 Timothy 4:11 to 6:21 (52 verses, 750 words), there are 37 imperative verbs

Important hermeneutic principle: these commands were for Timothy, not us. We must look for the timeless truths.

- “Command and teach these things”
- “Do not let anyone despise your youthfulness”
- “Be an example for the faithful”
- Until Paul arrived in Ephesus again, “pay attention”
 - to reading
 - to encouragement
 - to teaching
- “Do not neglect your spiritual gift”

- “Practice these things”
 - “Be in these things”
- “Keep a firm grasp on yourself and the teaching”
 - “Remain in them”
- *didaskalia*, “teaching,” is used 15x in 1-2 Timothy and Titus; 8x in 1 Timothy; 4x in this chapter/context
- The reason is that by keeping a firm grasp and remaining, Timothy would deliver both himself and those who listened to him
 - Deliver from what?
 - Probably from the deceitful spirits and demonic doctrines

1 Timothy 5:1–2

- “Don’t even consider rebuking an older man” – not strictly an imperative, but it is basically the strongest type of prohibition in Koine Greek
 - *presbyteros* is not “elder” as in office but “older” as in age
 - The sense of the verb is “strike at”
 - This would be a strong denouncement, probably public, as a form of punishment
- The local congregation is a family of families and should function that way. This extended to all fellow believers, not just older men
 - He was to “appeal to” them as if they were fathers
 - Younger men as brothers
 - Older women as mothers
 - Younger women as sisters

1 Timothy 5:3–10

- Paul’s fifth group of people in the church who needed special instructions both for them and for the congregation around them – older widows
- “Honor widows who are truly widows”
 - “true widow” – a woman with no one to take care of her except for the church
- “if any widow has children or grandchildren...they must learn first”
 - to respect their own home
 - to pay back their parents/grandparents

- Why? “This is pleasing before God”
- So who is eligible for congregational support?
 - “the true widow”
 - “who has been left alone”
 - “has placed her hope in God”
 - “continues in supplications and prayers night and day”
 - NOT those who live over-indulgent lives
- Warning! “Anyone who does not take care of his own and especially his family”
 - “he has denied the faith”
 - “he is worse than an unbeliever”
- Much like elders and deacons, “true widows” also have a list of character traits before they can be accepted on the list
 - At least 60 years old
 - One-man woman
 - Her good works are a testament to her character
 - “Bore children”
 - Showed hospitality
 - Washed the saints’ feet
 - Aided the oppressed
 - Devoted to every good work
- It seems possible that these “true widows” could be the “women” of 3:11
- While they would not have the official role of deacon, they would assist the deacons in serving the congregation and, in turn, be supported financially for the rest of their lives

1 Timothy 5:11–16

- Paul’s sixth group is “younger widows.” If they applied for congregational support, their applications were to be rejected.
 - Being a “true widow” on the list is a lifetime commitment to serving Christ – no more marriages or families
 - Younger widows, after taking the vow, may desire to get married again and have continued sexual desire that cannot be fulfilled under that oath

- Another concern Paul had was that younger widows would use their free time and free money to become lazy
- He envisioned them going to each other's homes, gossiping (about others in the church they were supposed to be serving?), and talking about things that must not be talked about
- Instead of enrolling them as true widows, Paul wanted something else for them:
 - to marry
 - to have children
 - to run their homes
 - to not give the opponents of Christianity any reason to insult them
- Summary statement on widows:
 - "If a believer has widows, he must help them and not burden the church with them, so that [the church] can help those who are truly widows in need."
 - The congregation has limited funds, so they must prioritize who is truly in need of help and who is not

1 Timothy 5:17–22

- Paul turns his attention back to elders. These are the overseers/pastors discussed in chapter three.
 - elder - can be used as an adjective or office
 - overseer - this is one of two main responsibilities of this office
 - shepherd - this is the second main responsibility
- Elders are those ruling over the congregation
 - Some rule well, others do not
 - All are worthy of honor (financial support?), but those who do well deserve double honor
- There is a third level of elders
 - Only some will work hard in word and teaching
- This tells us several important truths about the elders of a local church:
 - There should be a plurality
 - They should work together based on their gifts
 - Some deserve more support than others based on their level and type of work
- How do we know that "honor" is financial support rather than just respect?

- It's the same context as widows earlier in the chapter
- Paul quotes from Deuteronomy and Luke to support his point:
 - "Do not muzzle the ox while it is threshing"
 - "The worker is worthy of his wages"
- In addition to treating older men as fathers, there are a few things that are extended to church elders
 - "Do not accept an accusation against an elder unless there are two or three witnesses"
 - "Rebuke publicly those who are sinning, so that the rest will have fear"
 - "Observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing out of partiality"
- Timothy was also not to appoint elders ("lay hands on") too quickly, without a careful examination process
 - Some people look really good until you get to know them. Appoint them too soon, and it could be too late.
 - Additionally, if they do something wrong in their position, whoever appointed them would share in the guilt of their sin, so it was a way to protect himself as well.
- Notice that it is NOT the congregation that appoints elders
 - The apostles or their representatives appointed the first elders in the various churches
 - Moving forward, it seems that the current elders appoint new ones when necessary
 - Church leadership is not to be decided by vote of the congregation

1 Timothy 5:23

- Timothy seems to have been a timid young man at this time. He had little experience and a lot of responsibility.
- He was supposed to be overseeing the appointment of elders and keeping the church strong in Paul's absence.
- He was to make sure that he didn't appoint the wrong elders, otherwise he'd share in their potential sin.
- Some people were already down on him because he was "too young for this job."
- He had both stomach issues and frequent illnesses
- So, Paul's solution? "No longer drink water but use a little wine"

- Those who think all alcohol is wrong or sin would have a real problem with Paul
- Biblical principles about alcohol:
 - God never says that drinking alcohol is sin, and frequently in the OT he encouraged it as a form of celebration
 - Just because something is not sin, it does not mean it is wise.
 - In the church age, if a believer thinks that something is a sin for them, then it would be wrong to violate their conscience by doing it.

1 Timothy 5:24–25

- This seems to go back to the sins of verse 22 in the context of appointing elders too quickly
- It's easy to determine whether some people should be in leadership but not everyone

1 Timothy 6:1–2

- Paul's final instructions for certain groups or beliefs
- Slaves
 - Christian doctrine is countercultural, but none of the biblical writers encouraged that we rebel against the culture simply because we're Christians. That would cause the world to look down on Christianity even more.
 - Rather, we are to live and work within the culture, using our godly lives to win over unbelievers one by one.
- "Do not despise the masters who have faith"
 - Instead, the believing slaves were to work even harder for their believing masters because it would be financially better for them both

1 Timothy 6:3–5

- "If someone teaches different doctrine"
 - This is the first of 8x in these letters that Paul uses *hygiainō* ("hygiene") to describe teaching; it means "to be healthy"
 - Sound, godly teaching provides spiritual health to those who hear and obey it
- "he has become conceited"
- "understanding nothing"
- "but being sick about debates and disputes"

- “from which comes” – envy, contention, slander, evil suspicions, constant friction, the mind of depraved people, being deprived of the truth, considering godliness a means of financial gain

1 Timothy 6:6–8

- Contrary to those who think that godliness is a way to get rich, Paul said that “great gain” is actually “godliness with contentment”
 - Getting rich in this life is not our purpose; physical wealth is temporary
 - “satisfied” – same word Paul used in 2 Corinthians 12:9 that God’s grace is “sufficient”

1 Timothy 6:9–10

- “Those who desire to make themselves rich”
 - Being rich is not the issue; it’s the desire to be rich - the love of money
 - There is a difference between wanting more, enjoying more and needing more
 - Money is the strongest enemy against God; “you cannot serve God and money” (Matthew 6:24)
- “They fall into” – temptation, trap, many foolish and harmful lusts
- “They plunge the people into ruin and destruction”
- Why? “The root of all evils is love of money”
 - Get led astray from the faith
 - Pierce themselves

1 Timothy 6:11–12

- “Flee these things”
 - Similar list as 2 Timothy 2:22
- “Fight the good fight of the faith”
- “Grasp hold of eternal life”

1 Timothy 6:13–16

- “I command you...that you keep the commandment”
 - Before God the life-giver

- Before Jesus the model confession holder
- How? Spotless, irreproachable
- When? Until Jesus comes back
- Great summary theology about God
 - “The blessed and only sovereign”
 - “The king over those who rule as kings”
 - “The lord over those who rule as masters”
 - “The only one who has immortality”
 - “Who lives in unapproachable light”
 - “Who no one of humanity has seen nor is able to see”

1 Timothy 6:17–19

- “To those who are wealthy in the present age”
 - Don’t be proud
 - Don’t place your hope in uncertain riches
 - Place your hope in God who gives us things to enjoy
 - Do good, be rich in good works
 - Be generous, sharing freely
- What is the result if they obey these commands?
 - They will store up a good foundation in the coming age
 - They will grasp what is truly life

1 Timothy 6:20–21

- “Guard the deposit”
 - Repeated in 2 Timothy 2:2
- “So-called knowledge” – there is much that passes for knowledge today that is really foolishness
 - Do not get caught up in those things
- “Grace be with you all” – not just Timothy but the entire congregation