



An Introduction to 1 Timothy

What is 1 Timothy?

1 Timothy is a short (6 chapters) book of the Bible, found in the New Testament after 2 Thessalonians and before Titus. It is a letter (also called an 'epistle'), one of the so-called 'pastoral epistles' (along with 2 Timothy and Titus), which were written to specific church leaders.

Who wrote it, and to whom?

1 Timothy is written by the apostle Paul to the young pastor, Timothy (see the first two verses of the letter). You can read about Paul's life in the book of Acts, from 7.58 onwards. Previously called Saul, Paul had been an hardened enemy of Christianity, pursuing and persecuting Jesus' followers. The risen Lord Jesus appeared to him (the 'Damascus Road' event, recorded in Acts 9), and Paul was powerfully converted. He subsequently became a preacher of the gospel, and an itinerant apostle, planting churches across the Roman empire (much of the second half of the book of Acts follows his journeys). In Acts 16 we read that he met Timothy, a Christian young man, in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish Christian and his father was a Greek. We read elsewhere that his grandmother, Lois, was a believer too (2 Timothy 1.5). Paul took Timothy as a travelling companion and evidently acted as a mentor to him, a relationship which is warmly apparent from Paul's two letters to Timothy. It is likely that Timothy was given a hard time as a pastor by certain groups of Jewish-background believers, both on account of his young age and of his Greek father (he would have been considered not a 'proper' Jew). Note how much encouragement Paul gives him in 1 and 2 Timothy. For instance, in his greeting at the very start of 1 Timothy, Paul gives Timothy the profound affirmation of calling him his 'true child in the faith'.

Where?

Verse three orients us to the place; Timothy is to stay behind in Ephesus. Ephesus (in modern-day Turkey) was a major centre in the ancient world. Among other things, it had a famous temple to the goddess Diana (also known as Artemis), was a centre of commerce, and had a sizeable Jewish population. We read the account of the gospel taking root there in Acts 19-20. Evidently God blessed the ministry of the gospel with such widespread response that the city's economy began to be affected, as people stopped buying idols. This caused the famous riot in the amphitheatre.



When?

Whilst we do not know with certainty, the traditional understanding of when 1 Timothy 'fits in' is that Paul probably wrote this letter sometime in the years AD62-66, most likely after his imprisonment (at the end of the book of Acts) and release, but before his second imprisonment (which ended with his martyrdom).

Why?

It is evident as a repeated theme in 1 Timothy that the church in Ephesus was being troubled by false teachers. Paul immediately begins to address this after his initial greeting (see 1.3), and numerous subsequent verses give us more information (e.g., 1.3-7, 1.19-20, 4.1-3, 4.7, 6.3-5, 6.20-21). In fact, Paul had already commented earlier in the Bible in his 'farewell address' to the Ephesian elders (Acts 20) that 'from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.' Now, perhaps 15 years later, Timothy is charged to lead and teach the church away from error and back to the true gospel. This is why the theme of 'waging good warfare' features so much in 1 Timothy, since that is exactly what Timothy must do (e.g., 1.18, 6.12). Later in the Bible, in Revelation 2.1-7, the Lord Jesus charges the church in Ephesus that they had 'abandoned the love they had at first'. Nevertheless, correcting error is not the only thing Paul has in mind. Rather, Paul states why he has written it in 3.14-15:

'I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of truth.'

Paul begins with the foundation of the gospel: God, in Christ, is our Saviour and our hope (1.1-2, see also 1.15, 2.3-6, 4.10). Because of this great gospel, we (the church) must live and relate in a distinct way as those who are in God's 'household'. In summary, we might say that the 'pressing symptom' of false teaching in Ephesus prompts Paul to write a letter which gloriously unpacks how the church of God is to behave as his church.

Breakdown

We will go through 1 Timothy in the following chunks:

- 1 Timothy 1.1-2 and introduction - 7th January 2018
- 1 Timothy 1.1-7 - 14th January
- 1 Timothy 1.8-20 - 21st January



- 1 Timothy 2.1-7 - 28th January
- 1 Timothy 2.8-15 - 4th February
- 1 Timothy 3.1-7 - 11th February
- 1 Timothy 3.8-13 - 18th February
- 1 Timothy 3.14-4.5 - 25th February
- 1 Timothy 4.6-16 - 4th March
- 1 Timothy 5.1-16 - 11th March
- 1 Timothy 5.17-6.2 - 18th March
- 1 Timothy 6.3-10 - 25th March
- Easter Sunday - 1st April
- 1 Timothy 6.11-21 - 8th April

'The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory forever and ever.' (1 Timothy 1.15-17)

