

CHAPTER 13

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

(1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy)

These three epistles were written near the end of Paul's life. He wrote 1 Timothy and Titus during his last travels, and 2 Timothy from his final imprisonment in Rome. They are called Pastoral Epistles because Timothy and Titus were both assistants of Paul, serving as "evangelists," with special authority from him to organize and establish the Pauline churches. This special office of evangelist was a temporary one in the history of the government of the church, coinciding with the office of apostle. At the time of writing Timothy served in Ephesus and Titus in Crete.

Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles

Of all the epistles of Paul, these are the most contested.

A good summary of the evidence cited on both sides can be found in E. F. Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament*, ch. 17, "The Pastoral Epistles," esp. pp. 351-66.

Objections to Pauline authorship

The general claim is that these epistles were written near the beginning of the second century. There are two basic theories supported by those who reject Pauline authorship: the books are pseudepigraphical, using his name to give them greater weight; or the books contain fragments from Paul, edited and expanded by a circle of his disciples and followers. There are four lines of argument followed to support these theories:

1) Chronological objections

It is assumed that Paul was in prison only once. The places and persons mentioned in the Pastorals cannot be fitted into Paul's career prior to his imprisonment; therefore, the books are pseudepigraphical.

Answer: But note the contrast: Phil 1:25; 2:24, with 2 Tim 4:6-8

2) Linguistic objections

The Pastoral Epistles have many words which are found nowhere else in Paul's epistles (about a third of the words in the Pastorals; 175 words are not found elsewhere in the entire NT: 96 of them in 1 Tim., 43 in Titus, 60 in 2 Timothy). If all these books were written by the same man, it would seem that he would have used these words elsewhere.

Answer: But note the special nature of these letters. They are written to pastors, not to church congregations. About 80% of the unique words in the Pastorals are found in the Greek OT; they are not limited to times later than Paul.

3) Ecclesiastical objections

The form of church government evident in the Pastorals, with stated qualifications for elders and deacons, and with formal ordinations by Paul and by the presbytery, is thought to have developed slowly during the first century, and not to have been as described until the second century. Thus the books must come from the second century.

Answer: But there is early evidence for such church government (Acts 14:23; Phil 1:1). The early church followed the model of the Jewish synagogues, which had a similar form of government.

4) Theological objections

Some claim that the Pastorals show less concern for Pauline theology, as it is found in his undisputed epistles. There is not the emphasis on salvation by grace through faith, and other great Pauline themes. These doctrines are said to be either not stated or not defended.

Answer: But since these letters were written to pastors, there was no need to clearly state and defend these doctrines. They were assumed already. However, there is continuing exhortation to preach the Word of God, and to warn against heresy.

Additional Reasons for supporting Pauline authorship

- 1) Statement of the text (first verse of each book)
- 2) Strong external evidence (see Harrison, pp. 352-53)
- 3) Warm, personal passages (e.g., 1 Tim 1:13, 15, 18; 2:7)

1 Timothy

Timothy

Timothy was now the evangelist representing Paul in the large church at Ephesus, consisting of many congregations.

(For a summary outline of Timothy's life, see Ch. 6 of the notes, on the second missionary journey, pp. 1-2)

Timothy was a relatively young man, and may have felt some reluctance to lead the church (cf. 1 Tim 4:12, 15-16; 5:23 [weak stomach]). In addition, there were potentially serious problems in Ephesus. Paul especially was concerned about false idealism and superstition creeping into the church (1 Tim 1:19; 4:1-3; 5:15; 6:20; cf. Acts 20:28-30; 2 Tim 2:16-18; 4:14-15).

This epistle was written by Paul to encourage Timothy, and to instruct him about particular duties in the church (3:14-15; 4:13).

Date of 1 Timothy

The circumstances of the Pastorals require a date after Paul's first Roman imprisonment, which ended ca. A.D. 59. Similarity of thought and expression between this book and 2 Timothy suggests a date late in the period before Paul's second Roman imprisonment, starting sometime A.D. 64-67.

Points of interest

- Description of God (1:17; 6:15-16)
- Enemies named (1:20)
- Women in the church (2:9-15)
- Elder and deacon qualifications (ch. 3; elder qualifications also in Titus 1)
- Latter time apostasy (4:1-6)
- Ordination by the presbytery (4:14); cf. "my hands" in 2 Tim 1:6
- Qualified charity (5:3-16)
- Perhaps two kinds of elders (5:17)

- Paid ministry (5:17-18); quotes Luke 10:7 as Scripture, along with Deut 25:4
- “A little wine” (5:23)
- “The love of money” = “the root of all evil” (6:10)

Outline of 1 Timothy

Salutation, 1:1-2

I. Warnings against false teachers, 1:3-20

As Paul had warned the Ephesian elders in Acts 20, so here he warns Timothy to watch out for those who will come to lead the church into false doctrines, including myths and genealogies. The preaching of the law of God is required to oppose these false teachers.

Paul gives his own testimony, how God saved him from ignorance and sin and brought him to salvation. God receives all the glory. Paul urges Timothy to hold steadfastly to the faith he has received, and not follow those who oppose Paul (such as Hymenaius and Alexander).

II. Instructions for worship in the church, ch. 2

Paul lists the activities that should take place in the church, particularly the prayers that should be made. The men are to lead in the service. The women of the congregation are to take part in submission to the male leaders. The office of the woman is different from that of the man, but is of equal value in the eyes of God.

III. Qualifications of church officers, ch. 3

Timothy is to lead the church with the assistance of the elders (5:17, *presbuteros*), who are also called overseers or bishops (3:1, 2, *episkopos*). Paul gives Timothy the qualifications for elders (vv. 1-7).

The two terms refer to the same people; they are used interchangeably in Titus 1:5, 7. The idea that the bishop was a higher office, over the elder, developed later in the history of the early church; it is not a NT concept.

The other permanent office in the NT church was that of deacon (*diakonos*). It was primarily concerned with the physical and spiritual needs of the poor in the congregation (cf. the officers chosen in Acts 6). The qualifications for deacons are similar for those of elder, with some adaptation for the different functions of the office. They are promised a reward from God for their faithful service.

Paul concludes the chapter stating that Timothy, by following these instructions, will conduct himself properly in the church, fulfilling his part in the mystery of God.

IV. Exhortations to be a good minister, ch. 4-6

Timothy is to preach fervently, study diligently, and work untiringly, not being intimidated by false teachers. He should be willing to rebuke those who need it, and to provide himself as a good example. He should treat all the church members with appropriate respect.

An important section deals with the question of church charity, especially for the widows (5:3-16). Taking care of them was a proper church function (cf. Acts 6:1). Paul instructs that only those widows who have attained 60 years of age, who do not have families, and who have a good Christian testimony are to be supported by church funds.

Paul continues with ministerial advice for Timothy. Teaching elders (ministers) are to be paid by the church. Different types of sins and failings in the congregation need to be dealt with. Timothy especially needs to watch out for those who love money, and thereby corrupt the faith. Timothy is to continue his ministry, keeping the precious charge he has received from Paul and the apostolic church, even as Christ carried out the ministry of his Father.

Titus

Titus was an evangelist who worked under Paul in various ways. When Paul wrote this letter to him, Titus was directing the churches in Crete.

Outline of Titus' career

- 1) Not mentioned by name in Acts; some say he was the brother of Luke
- 2) Converted by Paul from heathenism; perhaps lived in Antioch-Syria (Acts 15:2; Gal 2:1-3; Titus 1:4)
- 3) Paul refused to circumcise him (Gal 2:3; cf. Timothy in Acts 16:1-3)
- 4) Sent by Paul to Corinth from Ephesus, and again from Macedonia (with 2 Corinthians), to prepare for the collection (2 Cor 7:5-7; 8:6, 16-19, 23)
- 5) Not mentioned again until Paul's last journeys, when he left Titus in Crete and sent this epistle to him (Titus 1:5)
- 6) Was to come to winter with Paul in Nicopolis (port on the Ionian Sea; Titus 3:12)
- 7) Before or during Paul's second Roman imprisonment, went to Dalmatia (northwest of Macedonia; 2 Tim 4:10; the text does not give the reason)
- 8) Traditions about Titus's later life mentioned in *NPF*, 2nd Series, 1:136, footnote 8, at Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3:4

Occasion of writing Titus

Paul had left Titus on the island of Crete to organize the churches that had started there. These are further instructions for him (1:5). As Timothy in Ephesus, so Titus in Crete needed to beware of the false teachers who were concerned about Jewish genealogies and speculations (1:10-16; 3:9-11).

Paul also wrote for personal reasons. Apollos and the lawyer Zenas were traveling and planned to come to Crete; Paul asks Titus to look after them (3:13). Also, Paul was sending Artemas or Tychicus there to help with the work; at that time Titus was to join Paul, who planned to winter in Nicopolis (3:12).

The date of Titus seems to be close to that of 1 Timothy, as it is similar in various ways. If Paul was arrested that summer or fall, the letter would be dated near the middle 60's.

Points of interest in Titus

- Bishops equated with elders (1:5, 7)
- Opinion of poet Epimenides against Cretans (1:12)
- Two great doctrinal passages (2:11-14, esp. v. 13; 3:3-7)
- Rejection of heretics (3:10)

Outline of Titus

Salutation, 1:1-4

This greeting is longer than usual, emphasizing the grand scope of the plan of God, and Paul's and Titus' place in that plan.

I. Titus' duties, 1:5-16

Titus is to ordain elders in each church, and Paul lists the qualifications for elders (vv. 5-9).

These qualifications are especially important in Crete, because the national habits and character are weak, and need the bracing effect of strong Christian elders.

II. The Christian in society, ch. 2 – 3:11

The practical Christian life is the primary emphasis of Titus. He is to preach the duties each person has: older men, older women, young women, young men, slaves, and all as subjects under the empire. Each Christian needs to lead a different kind of a life after being saved. Meanwhile, avoid foolish questions, speculations, and divisive issues.

III. Personal matters, 3:12-15

Paul informs Titus of the people who will be coming to Crete, and requests Titus to join him for the winter (see details above, "Occasion for writing Titus"). He closes with a benediction to Titus and the Christians in Crete.

2 Timothy

Occasion for writing 2 Timothy

As he wrote this epistle, Paul was in prison in Rome, in harsher conditions, expecting his coming execution (cf. 2 Tim 1:16-17; 4:6, 13, 16; cf. v. 17, “delivered from mouth of lion”; cf. figurative use in 1 Cor 15:32). He wrote to Timothy to come quickly and join him, bringing things Paul needs (4:9, 11, 13, 21).

The situation in Ephesus still concerned Paul too. There were false teachers there, who needed correction (2:16-18; cf. 3:13; 4:3-4). As Paul wrote, he mentioned that many, especially in Asia, had forsaken him (the exception of Onesiphorus impressed Paul, 1:16-18); and many of his friends could not be with him (1:15; 4:10-20).

Second Timothy is dated shortly before Paul’s death, somewhere in the interval A.D. 64-67.

Points of interest in 2 Timothy

- Paul’s last epistle, similar to 2 Peter
- Timothy’s mother and grandmother (1:5)
- Chain of teaching: Timothy → faithful men → others also (2:2)
- Christian warfare (2:3-4), Christian athletics (2:5), and Christian farming (2:6)
- Inspiration passage (3:15-17)
- Paul’s faithfulness (4:6-8)

Outline of 2 Timothy

Salutation, 1:1-2

I. Paul’s confidence in God, 1:3-18

God had ordered all of salvation; he had brought Christ to earth and back to heaven; he had saved Paul and Timothy; and he would bring a glorious end to all their labor and suffering. Timothy needed only to be faithful, guarding what God had entrusted to him.

II. Exhortations to a diligent ministry, ch. 2-3

Timothy needs to be strong, conduct himself as a soldier, as an athlete, and as a farmer. Jesus suffered and overcame, and he is our example. We need to be diligent, working hard as a good workman, to receive God's approval.

Paul warns Timothy against the heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus, and against the evil temptations of youth, and the universal temptation to quarrel. Paul compares the false teachers to those who will come in the last days (note the list of sins, 3:2-9). On the other hand, Timothy has Paul as an example, especially how Paul has come through all his persecutions. Timothy will find comfort and strength as he continues to study and preach the inspired Word of God.

III. Paul's final testimony, 4:1-8

In this beautiful passage Paul gives final encouragement to Timothy, and declares how he has finished his course, and how the faithful Lord will reward him with the crown of righteousness.

IV. Personal matters, 4:9-22

Paul asks Timothy to come quickly to him in Rome, and lists those who had left him. Yet God was faithful, and stood by Paul.

After final greetings, Paul concludes with a benediction, first to Timothy (in the singular, "your spirit"), and then to the church in Ephesus (in the plural, "you").