

1 Timothy: Introduction

Author: The Apostle Paul wrote this letter (1 Timothy 1:1), though some suggest others e.g., Timothy, Titus, Luke, and an admirer or imitator under a pseudonym, but the evidence is weak.

Date: this epistle was written around AD 62 (though some suggest near Paul's death, at the end of the 1st century, or well into the 2nd century).

Audience: 1 Timothy is one of the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). Paul wrote these towards the end of his life. The letters discuss matters young pastors should know and understand: church organization (including appointing elders and deacons and the role of women), church discipline (opposing rebellious members or false teachers), and the importance, maintenance, and application of doctrinal truth. The recipient of 1 Timothy is a key member of Paul's ministry team: Timothy (1 Timothy 1:2). The name "Timothy" means "honoring God" or "honored by God," perhaps given to him by his godly mother Eunice.

Timothy is mentioned in the book of Acts (16:1; 17:14, 15; 18:5; 19:22; 20:4); he was very close to Paul (2 Timothy 3:10-11), mentioned more than any other companion in his epistles (Romans 16:21; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1, 19; Philippians 1:1; 2:19; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 3:2, 6; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; Philemon 1:1) and was the last person Paul wrote to (2 Timothy). His mother was Jewish and his father Gentile (Acts 16:1). Since Paul calls him a beloved and true son in the faith, he may have been brought to faith in Christ by Paul during his First Missionary Journey (Acts 14:6-7; 1 Timothy 1:2, 18; 2 Timothy 2:1—though Acts 16:1-3 seems to indicate that this is the first time Paul met him) or by someone else or by his mother and grandmother (2 Timothy 1:5). Timothy was young but faithful to the Lord from an early age, so during Paul's Second Missionary Journey God directed Paul and the elders of Lystra to lay hands on him and commission him to utilize his spiritual gifts as a part of Paul's team (Acts 16:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:14; 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:6; 3:15). Paul had him circumcised so that he and Timothy would have a better outreach to the Jewish community (Acts 16:3). He was a key player in Paul's ministry, serving as one of his trusted troubleshooters (Acts 18:5; 19:22; 20:4; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Philippians 2:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6) and was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment (Colossians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Philemon 1:1).

Purpose: after Paul's first Roman imprisonment, Timothy traveled with him to Ephesus and stayed there while Paul traveled to Macedonia. Paul left him there to confront the individuals teaching erroneous and false doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3-7; 4:1-7). This letter served as specific guidance for Timothy on how to behave and what to do when dealing with all the problems in Ephesus until Paul arrived (1 Timothy 1:18-19; 3:14-15; 4:12-16; 5:21; 6:11-14, 20-21). The false/erroneous doctrine had led the church astray in many ways, e.g., there is division and arguments (1:4), self-appointed elders (1:6-7, 19-20), a need for corporate and individual prayer (2:1-8), angry and argumentative men (2:8; 6:4), superficial women (2:9-10), women who seek male authority (2:11-15), a need for qualified elders and deacons (3:1-13), false teachers being deceived by Satan's wicked doctrines concerning marriage and food (4:1-5), a need for sound doctrine that leads to godly behavior (4:12-16; 6:3-5), ungodliness in men, women, young and old (5:1-2), younger and unqualified widows taking advantage of church support (5:3-16), qualified elders not paid properly and sinning elders needing rebuke (5:17-20), a need to properly qualify elders (5:22-25), improper conduct by Christian slaves (6:1-2), and an improper view of wealth (6:6-10, 17-19).