



THE TIMOTHY LETTERS

THE
PASTORS
HANDBOOK

By Walter Cates

Preface

The Timothy letters are two of the clearest and easiest to understand, of all the letters of the New Testament. There are some translation difficulties that cause some readers problems. Also, the cultural differences of societies of 2000 years ago and today seem to be a stumbling block for many. My hope and intent here, is to turn these stumbling blocks into stepping stones to understanding.

FIRST TIMOTHY

Timothy joined Paul's entourage early in Paul's second mission trip. Timothy was a dedicated Christian who was influenced by his Christian mother and Grandmother. He was most likely first introduced to Paul during Paul's first visit to Lystra, his home town. He was soon to become a key and much-loved disciple of Paul.

As you read First Timothy you will note, Paul does not open this letter in the typical manner. Normally Paul opens with a, from Paul and his fellow helpers in the area. That was followed by who the letter was intended in detail. Then there would be a blessing followed by a prayer. Not here, (Chapter 1:1-7) just from Paul, to Timothy and finally a short blessing. I believe this puts an emphasis on the personal nature of the letter. Although these letters are personal guidance meant for Timothy they are, 2000 years later, still the foundation for the required character of the leadership of the Christian Church.

As you study the letters to Timothy, you must remember they were written specifically to Timothy. Unlike most of Paul's letters these were not meant to be shared with the general fellowship in the region. No, they were private and personal letters to a person Paul loved and cared for very much. Paul makes statements to Timothy that he would not make if he were teaching in the fellowship.

The timing of First Timothy is difficult to pinpoint. Theologians and commentators have disputed the timing since the sixth century. If you read First Timothy very carefully you will find no historic time indicators. There are also no references to prison or, in chains for Christ. Had Paul been in prison or in chains he would have mentioned it. Prison, chains, and persecution were writing tools Paul used to illuminate and validate his mission on earth.

During Paul's second mission journey Timothy was "sent back" several times and achieved success in calming relations within churches.

Things were a little different with Paul's third missionary journey. A little past half way through the journey Paul visited Corinth and the church that was established on his second journey. He then went on to Ephesus. While in Ephesus he received disturbing reports from Corinth. He sent Timothy back to Corinth to set things right. News then reached Paul that Timothy was met by much resistance. Paul then sent Titus, a strong forceful Greek, to aid Timothy (Acts 19:22, 1 Cor. 16:10-11, 2 Cor. 7). I believe that it was Titus, at that time, who carried the letter we call First Timothy to Corinth to present to Timothy.

Chapter 1 Verses 8 through 11 are among some of the most misinterpreted verses in first Timothy. Some commentators even use these verses as proof that Paul did not write the Timothy letters, they claim that Paul would not promote such an idea.

Again, we must start off with the ‘who from, who to, when and where’ questions. The when and where have been debated since the 5th century and really are not that relevant to extracting the message.

These letters are instructional letters. Not to spread the Gospel or define a Christian’s life. They are how to lead a church, pick leaders for a church and how to handle conflict in a church. When Paul writes “the law is not for the righteous but for the lawbreakers” is a reflection that Paul believes Timothy to be a righteous man and not under judgement of the law.

For the rest of chapter 1 Paul explains and illustrates that it is by the Grace of Christ that he and Timothy have the privilege to spread the Gospel. Paul uses, himself, as a most unlikely choice for such a mission, yet by the Grace of God he was chosen.

Chapter 2 starts out with instructions on how men will conduct prayer worship sessions. PLEASE REMEMBER at that time in history women were not allowed to speak or teach during fellowship. A lot of people get rather upset with verses 9 through 15. I must remind the readers; Paul’s mission was not to correct all the wrongs of the first century culture. Paul’s mission was to spread the Gospel. If Paul were to oppose the norms of the culture of his time, he would have closed the door of access to the souls he needed to bring the Gospel to. He would lose the access to meeting and gathering places. In view of what Paul’s mission was, I cannot find fault in what he has written.

Some translations read abrasively to modern culture. Some translations were meant to be that way, in times when the Church was a vassal of the King and simply a way of controlling the peasants and that is a deep separate study.

The following is a, normalized grammar, word for word translation directly from the oldest Greek language copy.

- ⁹ Similarly, women also are to be adorning themselves in raiment, decorously, with modesty and sanity, not ⁱwith braids and gold, or pearls or costly vesture,
- ¹⁰ but (what is becoming to women professing[~] a reverence for God) thwith good works.
- ¹¹ Let a woman be learning in quietness ⁱwith ^eall subjection.
- ¹² Now I am not permitting a woman to be teaching nor yet to be domineering over a man, but to be in quietness
- ¹³ (for Adam was first molded, thereafter Eve,
- ¹⁴ and Adam was not seduced, yet the woman, being deluded, has come to be in the transgression).
- ¹⁵ Yet she shall be ^lsaved through the child bearing, if ever they should be remaining in faith and love and holiness with sanity.

These statements all fit the culture of the time when Paul wrote them.

Chapter 3:1 starts the description of overseers or bishops depending upon which translation you are reading. Some theologians and commentators use the fact that the title Bishop would not have been used in Paul's time as evidence that the letter was written at a much later time and not by Paul. However, the oldest copy of First Timothy, was written in Greek. In that document the word used was επισκοπης. This word translates as supervisor or supervision. The word bishop comes only from the translations from the Latin Vulgate and the Syriac Bibles.

The rest of chapter 3 deals with the character of the supervisors and deacons of the fellowship. An in-depth and detailed description of the attributes of a church leader is presented. You will note, essentially the same scale applies to both overseers and deacons. Unique to the Christian culture, the husband of only one wife who is temperate and trustworthy in everything. Notice also that his children are obedient and non-rebellious. Of particular note, is verse 6, "He should not be a recent convert". This is a common problem. New Christians are excited and want to do all the Christian things. Most fellowships can use all the help they can get. This sometimes causes advancements within the fellowship that exceed the Spiritual growth of the NEW CHRISTIAN. Leaders within the fellowship must be on guard to insure this does not happen. When it does, quite often both the new Christian and the fellowship are harmed.

If you read chapter 4 carefully you will see clearly, these are personal instructions to Timothy.

The entire chapter is addressing the Essene Jewish sect members who had become Christians and were attempting to enforce Essene doctrine upon Gentile Christian believers.

The verses of Chapter 5 through chapter 6:2 contain instructions on the interactions within the fellowship.

The verses of 6:3-10 define the false teachers, what they teach and their most likely motivation, and those who wander from the true Gospel.

Paul finishes chapter 6 with a few general objectives of pastoral teachings. The translation of παραγγελλε to English as **command** has been distorted by centuries of tradition and cross translation from Greek to Latin to English and so on. When you read chapter 6 try substituting the word teach or teachings for the word command.

Paul ends this very personal letter with the shortest and simplest closing of all his letters.

Grace be with you.

SECOND TIMOTHY

Paul opens Second Timothy in the same way he did the first letter. Once again reinforcing the idea that this letter was meant for Timothy's eyes only. Then goes on with an affirmation of his, as well as Timothy's faith. Furthermore, no amount of suffering or persecution can dim the light of the glory they will share, in eternity, for having accepted the Lords commission to spread the Gospel.

Near the end of chapter 1 Paul gives us a solid clue on the time and origin of this letter. Verses 16 through 18 clearly states that he is in Rome, in prison and in chains.

Paul reminds Timothy in chapter 2:1-7 that his mission is to spread the Gospel as it was taught to him. Do not get embroiled in issues of culture or society. Stand firm only in the Gospel.

It seems that verse 8 over simplifies the Gospel from Paul. We must however, take it in context, Paul is speaking specifically to Timothy. Paul is a Jewish scholar who has spent years teaching Timothy. By only stating that Christ was raised from the dead and He was of the lineage of David, he has evoked all the Hebrew prophesies of the Redeemer. Then follows the evocation with a trust worthy saying.

Chapter 2:14-23 is a warning to stay anchored in the true Gospel. Suppositions applied to the Gospel will degenerate the fellowship and condemn the participants. Life is filled with **stuff**. Paul gives several analogies of life situations and how there are good things to hold on to. Also, life is filled with unimportant things, the rhetoric of life. He cautions Timothy to seek and hold on to the truth of the Gospel and reject the rhetoric.

Chapter 2:24-26 is a gentle reminder that the minister of the Gospel is charged only with teaching the word. It is the Lord who grants salvation. So often good people go astray believing they are saving mankind. Ministers of the Gospel teach the word, the rest of the work is up to the Holy Spirit. I have known people who have returned from missions down hearted because they did not **save** anyone, or very few. I ask them, "How many heard the WORD?" That is the key, teachers, preachers, and missionaries are charged to spread the WORD. Their charge is not to save souls. Oh, by the way if you are not a teacher, preacher or missionary then you are charged with the support of those who are.

Paul opens chapter 3 with a parenthetical insertion, describing events of the last days (verses 1-9). Take note also of Paul's description of the last days. This letter was written before any of the gospels or the Acts of The Apostles were written. In fact, 40 years before Revelations was written.

Verses 6 to 9 need a little translation clarification. The term “weak willed women” or “weak women” is translated from the Greek word, γυναίκαρια. The word translates as ‘little women’ or ‘adolescent women’ or ‘female child.’ The term was use as a colloquialism to define anyone who acts in opposition to what they have been taught. These verses end with a warning of what has and will happen to the γυναίκαρια.

In verses 3:10-17 the letter slips back into the Preacher’s Manual mode and continues through 4:1-5.

Paul is facing the reality of his situation in verses 6 through 8. He has faced his first defense in the Roman court. It did not go well for him and no one spoke in his defense. However, he is not downhearted. He knows the final judgement comes from our Lord in heaven,,, and he has passed that test.

Everyone who was supporting Paul has either left or has been sent on missions by Paul. Only Dr. Luke remains. Paul asks Timothy to come to him and bring some special needs.

The Alexander that comes up next was a Jewish metal worker in Ephesus who opposed the Gospel of Grace. Alexander stirred up Demetrius and other Greek silversmiths causing a riot in Ephesus. Alexander was a Jewish metalsmith who opposed the Gospel of Grace and preached that it was heretical. Paul often refers to Jewish opposition to the Gospel of Grace as Alexandrian, in particular, those who said Christianity was heresy.

Paul gets very somber. I think he knows his journey is almost complete. But he knows the Lord will welcome him into the Heavenly Kingdom.

Paul closes the final greeting with:

“The Lord be with your spirit.
Grace be with you.”

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