

1 TIMOTHY

1 TIMOTHY — INTRODUCTION

We now reach the Pastoral Epistles of which there are three, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. They are so called because their contents are chiefly directions regarding the pastoral work of ministers. It is evident that they deal with persons and things belonging to a late period in the apostolic age. The heretics mentioned in them indicate this. These are of Jewish character, for they profess to be teachers of the law (^{<5007>}1 Timothy 1:7), and are described as of the circumcision (^{<5010>}Titus 1:10), and as causing men to attend to Jewish fables (3:9). And yet they are not the same Judaizing teachers with which we became acquainted in Acts (v. 15), and Galatians, or even Colossians. They have progressed further on the "down grade," and "are involved in a total apostasy from God and from good." They had lost all true understanding of the law (^{<5007>}1 Timothy 1:7); had repudiated a good conscience (v. 19); had become hypocrites and liars (4:2); were branded with immorality (4:2); of corrupt minds, using religion to better themselves in the world (^{<5015>}1 Timothy 6:5; ^{<5011>}Titus 1:11); subverters of the faith (^{<5017>}2 Timothy 2:17); victimizing foolish persons to their ruin (^{<5016>}2 Timothy 3:6); confessing God with their mouths, but denying him in their works, abominable and disobedient, and for every good work reprobate (^{<5016>}Titus 1:16). A dark catalogue this, corroborating the teaching of 2 Thessalonians as to the working already of the apostasy in the church. The false doctrines attacked by Paul in his earlier epistles were now bearing fruit in laxity of life and morals.

DATE OF THE EPISTLES

It is clear from the foregoing that the date of these epistles must have been later than the period of Paul's history covered by the Acts, and that they were probably written after his liberation from imprisonment. There is reason to believe that he was imprisoned a second time, and in the interval between the first epistle to Timothy and that to Titus were written, while the second to Timothy followed during the second imprisonment, as it is thought.

Paul, after the imprisonment mentioned in the Acts, journeyed eastward as he anticipated in his letters to Philemon (v. 22), and the church at Philippi (1:26; 2:24). He visited Ephesus again, and doubtless took further journeys West occupying three or four years. At Ephesus he left Timothy and passed into Macedonia (^{<500B>}1 Timothy 1:3), from which he wrote him the first epistle. Not far from this time he must have visited Crete in company with Titus and have left him there to complete the organization of the churches. This will appear when we come to the study of the epistle to Titus, which it is thought was written somewhere in Asia Minor, and when Paul was on his way to winter at Nicopolis in Greece. It was at this place he was arrested again probably, "as implicated in the charges made against the Christians after the fire in A.D. 64, and sent to Rome." Once more in that city, he is treated no longer with the courtesy of his former residence there but as an ordinary criminal (^{<500D>}2 Timothy 2:9). All his Asiatic friends avoided him except Onesiphorus (^{<500E>}2 Timothy 1:16). Only Luke was with him. Timothy is entreated to come to him before winter (^{<500F>}2 Timothy 4:21). He is expecting execution (^{<500G>}2 Timothy 4:6), and in view of it he writes his second epistle to Timothy, about A.D. 67 or 68.

HISTORY OF TIMOTHY

For the beginnings of Timothy's history you will need to refer to ^{<440D>}Acts 16. He was converted perhaps on the occasion of Paul's first visit to Lystra, since it was on his second visit he was chosen to be his traveling companion. He accompanies Paul throughout that second missionary journey, wintering with him at Corinth, and seems to have been with him pretty steadily, except for the commissions on which he was occasionally sent (^{<440E>}Acts 19:22; ^{<440F>}1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10), not only throughout the second, but the third journey as well. About A.D. 62 or 63 he was with the apostle while the latter was a prisoner at Rome (^{<500H>}Colossians 1:1; Philem. 1; ^{<500I>}Philippians 1:1). In A.D. 66 or 67, after that imprisonment, he was left by Paul in charge of the church at Ephesus. It was while he was here that he received the first epistle or letter from Paul. A year later it may be, the second was written, when Paul was again a prisoner, and Timothy repairs to Rome to visit him, after which nothing further is heard of him.

In his character he was a very earnest and consecrated man, and yet timid and diffident, and hesitating to deal with certain difficulties of his work. Compare here ^{<460D>}1 Corinthians 16:10; ^{<500J>}1 Timothy 4:12; 5:23; and ^{<500K>}2 Timothy 1:5, 7; 3:10.

QUESTIONS

1. Name the Pastoral Epistles and state why they are so called.
2. To what period do they belong, and why is it so believed?
3. Describe the heresies therein referred to.
4. Give Paul's history between the end of Acts and the writing of 2 Timothy.
5. Give an outline of Timothy's history.

1 TIMOTHY 1 — CHIEFLY PERSONAL

THE SALUTATION (1:1-2)

In this notice the beautiful designation of our Lord Jesus Christ as "Our Hope." He Himself is our Hope. And when we remember that these words were written by Paul in his later years, they are all the more affecting. And notice the designation given Timothy in verse 2. What bearing has this upon the proposition that he probably owed his conversion to Paul's labors?

REFERENCE TO TIMOTHY'S MISSION AT EPHEBUS (VV. 3-4)

We have referred to the circumstance of his being left there by Paul, in our introduction. It seems to have necessitated urging on Paul's part. What language indicates as much? What charge was he to lay upon the teachers at Ephesus? In what two directions (especially Jewish) were they inclined to digress from the Gospel? What would be likely to be the outcome of such digression?

DESCRIPTION OF THE FALSE TEACHERS (VV. 5-7)

In this description it will be noted that the root of the offense, was in swerving from love, for such is the correct translation of the word "charity" in verse 5.

DESCRIPTION OF THE TRUE USE OF THE LAW (VV. 8-11)

These false teachers pretended to discourse of the law, by which is meant the law of Moses, without really knowing the subject on which they spoke.

The law did not apply to those who were saved under the Gospel, but it had the same bearing as ever to the unbeliever.

DIGRESSION: THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF PAUL'S CONVERSION (VV. 12-17)

This springs from his allusion to the Gospel in verse 11, a Gospel committed to his trust as a steward to proclaim. He does not spare himself in extolling the grace of God toward him (vv. 13-15), and he uses his own history as an example and encouragement to the worst of sinners (v. 16).

PERSONAL CHARGE TO TIMOTHY (VV. 18-20)

This charge is the single one to fight the good fight of faith, to which he is stimulated by two considerations. The first is the "prophecies which went before" on him, the supernatural predictions of his future; and the second, the failure of some who had started in the fight with him and fallen back. The good fight of faith in his case is that which was personal to himself, and that which concerned his ministry. It is not the conflict of the Christian life in general which Paul refers to so much, as that of a leader in the church against the opponents of a pure Gospel.

QUESTIONS

1. What title is given Jesus Christ in this lesson?
2. What led to the defection of these false teachers?
3. How does Paul consider his ministration of the Gospel?
4. What is meant by the fight of faith in Timothy's case?
5. How many questions are in the body of this lesson, and how many have you answered satisfactorily?

1 TIMOTHY 2-3 — CONCERNING PUBLIC PRAYER

Chapter 2 is taken up with regulations concerning public prayer. First, he directs that intercessory prayer he made for all men (v. 1-7). What class of men is especially singled out (v. 2)? What selfish motive on the part of the church should induce such intercessory prayer? And yet what higher

motive is suggested (v. 4)? What does this verse suggest as to the object of such intercession so far as those in authority are concerned? On what ground may such intercession be made (vv. 5-6)? It seems evident that intercession was not being made in this church at Ephesus. Perhaps persecution at the hands of the authorities had caused it to be less earnestly conducted, or perhaps a party spirit had something to do with it; at all events the church needed to be stirred up to it, and Timothy to get them doing it. This was part of the good warfare he was to war.

Second, he refers to the way men should pray (v. 8). "Everywhere" may refer to every place the worshippers were in the habit of assembling in Ephesus. There may have been several bodies of believers there meeting in different places. The fact that men without distinction of ministerial functions were to pray is significant. Not only were the deacons, or elders, or presbyters, or bishops, to pray, but the "men" were to pray. There is no priesthood in the church except the common priesthood of believers. But how were they to pray? "Lifting up" the hands was a Jewish custom in prayer and seems to have been adopted in the church.

But what kind of hands were the men to hold up? "Holy hands" are those not stained with sin (^{<3274>}Psalm 25:4; 26:6; ^{<3048>}James 4:8). If we regard iniquity in our hearts God will not hear us. "Without wrath and doubting" might read without wrath and disputing or contention. No religious disputes, no outbreaks in daily life could be permitted where prayer was to be engaged in.

All expositors are agreed that "I will" of verse 8 should be carried over to verse 9. The latter then would read, "In like manner, I will that the women adorn themselves," etc. What, in this case, would be the force of the expression "in like manner"? Is it meant that he would have the men pray in every place, and the women "in like manner" be silent? Or would he have the men lifting up holy hands, and the women "in like manner" adorning themselves? So unlikely is either of these that many expositors supply the word "pray" in verse 9 to complete the sense. The two verses would then harmonize like this: "I will therefore that men pray everywhere lifting up holy hands, and in like manner, I will that women pray in modest apparel," etc., to the end of verse 10. Compare with ^{<3115>}1 Corinthians 11:5.

At verse 11 there is a translation, and the apostle passes on to something new. What is that new thing about women he now takes up? Not her relation to public prayer, but her relation to her husband, especially in the

matter of public teaching in the church. The command to silence here suggests ~~4:34~~ 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, where the context shows that there were various forms of disorder and confusion in the church assemblies, especially the making remarks and asking questions about the words of others, from which women, who seem to have been the chief offenders, were enjoined.

But what about teaching? "I suffer not a woman to teach." To teach and to govern are the special functions of the presbyter or elder. The teacher and pastor, named in the divine gifts to the church (~~4:11~~ Ephesians 4:11), are considered by some to be the same; and the pastor is generally regarded as identical with the bishop. Now there is no instance in the New Testament of a woman's being set over a church as bishop, or teacher or ruler. What then if we say it is to this, to which Paul here refers?

The reason why woman is placed in subjection to man as stated by Paul in verses 13-14 is sufficiently plain, but there is a mystery about verse 15. Certainly it does not mean that the mere act of child-bearing saves a woman, which would contradict the primary truth of the Gospel that we are saved by faith and not works. As a matter of fact, moreover, the word for child-bearing here includes more than the act of giving birth, and means the proper nurture and training of children. The apostle's meaning is, that women are to be kept in the path of safety, not by taking to themselves the office of the man (taking part in the assemblies of the church), but by the performance of the peculiar functions which God has assigned to their sex.

Chapter 3 is a charge to Timothy concerning the selection and the duties of church officials. First, he treats of bishops or overseers (vv. 1-7). It is to be remembered that the word "bishop" here is the same as "presbyter" or "elder" elsewhere, and does not mean a higher and distinct order of the ministry. See ~~5:15~~ Titus 1:5, compared with verse 7 of the same chapter. Secondly, he treats of deacons (vv. 8-13). Then he brings these directions to a close by a solemn statement of their object and glorious import (vv. 14-16).

QUESTIONS

1. What probably explains the occasion for these instructions about prayer for rulers?
2. What illustrates the common priesthood of believers?

3. How might the difficulties in verses 9-15 be explained?
4. What about verse 15 especially?
5. Does the proposed definition satisfy you?
6. What is the particular theme of chapter 3?
7. How many orders of the ministry are here taught?

1 TIMOTHY 4 — CONCERNING FALSE TEACHERS

In verses 1-6 these false teachers are foretold and described. At what period are they to appear? Notice that this agrees with Paul's teachings to the Thessalonians about the apostasy. It also has a bearing upon the current question as to whether the world is growing better or worse. That question is too vast for mortal to answer, and we can only fall back upon what God says about it. In this and in other places, He has told us what to expect as the end of the age draws near, and it is for us to square our understanding and conduct accordingly.

Notice the detail of the Holy Spirit in describing these false teachers. They shall be under what kind of influence (v. 1)? What two leading tenets of their system are mentioned in verse 3? How does the apostle contradict these teachings in verses 4-5? Here we need to guard against the disposition to limit the application of this false teaching to Roman Catholicism. Celibacy and abstinence from meat suggest that phase of Christianity, but the teachings of the occult sciences, Christian Science included, enlarge our horizon considerably in estimating what the Holy Spirit meant in this case.

Verses 7-16, or perhaps beginning at verse 6, may be regarded as an exhortation to Timothy himself to that steadfastness and growth in his Christian life and calling so imperative in view of the false teaching he was called upon to combat, the germ of which had already sprung up. How does verse 7 indicate that, in Paul's estimation, these heresies were mere "abstract speculations without any connection with the historical realities and practical tendencies of Christianity"? The reference to "bodily exercise" in verse 8 is interesting. According to many it had reference to the physical abstinence from certain food, from marriage, etc., referred to above, which the heretics commended, but which Paul condemned. According to others,

he means the gymnastic exercises so much in vogue with the Greeks, especially the Olympic games. He would have the youth Timothy appreciate that the exercise begins with the inner man.

QUESTIONS

1. What bearing has this chapter on the questions whether the world is growing better or worse?
2. To what current heresies besides Roman Catholicism may verses 1-6 apply?
3. How does Paul feel about these heresies in his day?
4. In what way may the reference to bodily exercise be explained?

1 TIMOTHY 5-6 — MATTERS ECCLESIASTICAL & SOCIAL

Chapter 5 gives directions concerning Timothy's management of church affairs, first, as to his behavior towards the older and younger members of the flock, of both sexes (vv. 1-2). Secondly, as touching widows (vv. 3-16). By "widows indeed," verse 3, Paul means those who had no near relatives to support them (see vv. 4-5), and who were trusting in God (v. 6). At this point the apostle turns from the widows themselves to the persons whose duty it was to support them (v. 8), returning to the widows again, for the purpose of treating the subject from a different point of view, namely: that of the church deaconess, as many expositors believe (vv. 9-10). The younger widows were not to be inducted into this office from the likelihood that, desiring to marry again, they should thus become unfaithful to their covenant (vv. 11-12), and also for the reason named in verse 13. Of course, Paul does not mean that it was sinful for young widows to marry a second time, or he would not have recommended it in verse 14, but that it was a breach of their faith to Christ after having betrothed themselves to Him, so to speak, for this service. Verse 16 recurs to verse 4, about the pecuniary support of widows by their relatives that the church may be relieved of the burden.

Third, he speaks of Timothy's relation to the elders (i.e., the presbyters of the church (vv. 17-22)). The Greek word for elders here is the same as in verse 1, but while in that case elder men merely were intended, here the

context shows an official distinction. The directions concern the pecuniary provision for these church ministers (vv. 17-18), the esteem in which they should be held (v. 19), and yet the impartiality with which they should be treated in the event of wrongdoing (vv. 20-21). In the same connection, Timothy receives a caution about the selection of men for that office (v. 22). The chapter draws to an end with advice to Timothy in regard to his health. It seems quite irrelevant to the main subject and yet was suggested doubtless by the command at the end of the preceding verse. The irrelevancy affords a strong incidental proof of the genuineness of the epistle. It is incredible that an imposter forging the name of Paul should give a direction like this, so remote from everything else discussed. Nothing but reality, the real valetudinary situation of a real person, could have suggested it. Two other verses follow, perhaps intended to restrain Timothy from hasty judgments, referred to in verse 22, in the selection of men for the ministerial office. There are some men whose faults are very apparent, but others who can be known only by an after judgment. With reference to the latter great circumspection on the part of Timothy is urged. The same facts, however, apply to good works as well as evil, so that Timothy might be consoled in the thought that if he had unwittingly overlooked some of the latter class, they would sooner or later come to the light.

In the final chapter ecclesiastical matters give place to those of a different character. The servants in verses 1-2, are bond-servants. After laying down the law in relation to them, Paul digresses into a criticism of those who teach otherwise concerning them (vv. 3-5). It surprises us to learn of the hypocrisy of these false teachers even in those early days, since the apostle speaks of them as using godliness for a way of gain. A show of Christian life for them was a lucrative business (compare ⁵⁰¹¹Titus 1:11). This digression leads to another, for the reference to godliness and gain brings up the whole question of earthly riches in the life of the disciple (vv. 6-10). There is a sense in which true godliness does bring gain, if it be mingled with contentment, but contentment takes wings in the case of those whose condition is outlined in the verses following. The warning against this sin associated with the love of money leads to an earnest exhortation to Timothy personally, and a doxology springing out of it, when the theme is returned to again for a charge concerning the rich (vv. 17-19). The epistle concludes with another personal address to Timothy to keep the trust committed to him avoiding the errors before enumerated.

There is much in this epistle of deep practical value today, and especially applicable to ministers, Sunday school teachers, Christian workers and church leaders of every kind. May the Holy Spirit Himself apply it to us!

QUESTIONS

1. What three classes of directions are given Timothy in chapter 5?
2. Who are meant by "widows indeed"?
3. What is the instruction about elders?
4. What incidental proof of genuineness does chapter 5 afford?
5. To what depth did the hypocrisy of the false teachers go?
6. How is the question of earthly riches treated?
7. To whom is this epistle of practical value?