

INTRODUCTION

PLACE OF ORIGIN AND DATE

Little can be said with certainty of Paul's location when he penned 1 Timothy.¹ Although Paul does not say explicitly that he was in Macedonia, he appears to indicate that he had been in Ephesus with Timothy, had left Timothy behind, and had gone on to Macedonia: "As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus" (1:3).

If Paul was released from "house arrest" in Rome as the data in Acts 28:30 and the prison epistles might suggest and wrote this epistle at a subsequent time, the date for 1 Timothy would likely be 63–66. A chronology of Paul's life from Acts would indicate his imprisonment lasted until 61/62. The Neronian persecution of 64 would indicate that his release should precede that date. Eusebius recorded that Paul died in 67. If one accepts those dates, Paul would have penned 1 Timothy between 63 and 66.

Other suggestions are given by those who would contend that Paul died at the height of the Neronian persecution of 64. Some would, therefore, provide a date of 62–63 for composition of 1 Timothy. Robinson has suggested Paul's departure for Macedonia, leaving behind Timothy in Ephesus (1:3), reflects the situation seen in Acts 20:1–4. He, therefore, places 1 Timothy within the historical data of Acts and suggests a date of 55.² Scholars who argue for pseudonymity

¹The discussion of the epistles in this commentary will follow a basic chronological arrangement – 1 Timothy, Titus, 2 Timothy.

²Robinson, *Redating*, pp. 82-83.

generally date the epistle during the second century (cf. Kümmel).

A date of 63–66 seems best to fit the data currently available.

DESTINATION AND AUDIENCE

Although on the surface 1 Timothy seems to be personal correspondence between Paul and Timothy, his son in the faith, there is much in the epistle that indicates Paul intended the letter to be read and heeded by the congregation at Ephesus. “Grace be with you” in 6:21 is plural. Many of Paul’s admonitions to Timothy (e.g., “Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young,” 4:12) may also have served to advise the church of their correct path of action.

Timothy is well known from Acts and the epistles of Paul. He was a native of Lystra; his mother was Jewish and his father a Gentile. About A.D. 49 he became a co-worker of Paul. As a young man likely converted and trained by Paul, Paul found a special place in his heart for him (1 Cor 4:17; Phil 2:22; 1 Tim 1:2). Timothy appears alongside Paul in the opening greetings of several epistles (2 Cor 1:1; Phil 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). He was undoubtedly considered a trusted colleague and co-worker (1 Thess 3:2) who could be trusted to be sent on special missions (1 Cor 16:10; Phil 2:20). If one accepts the traditional site for the place of writing of the prison epistles, Timothy was with Paul in Rome (Col 1:1; Phlm 1). He has, at this juncture, been left behind in Ephesus to set things in order. He is a young man (see the discussion of 1 Tim 4:12) who was perhaps not in the best of health (1 Tim 5:23).

The church where Timothy was laboring found itself in the midst of the fourth largest city in the Roman Empire. Ephesus housed a famous shrine to Artemis, the great mother goddess, known by the Romans as Diana of the Ephesians. Upon arriving at Ephesus Paul met a group of disciples whose knowledge of the gospel was so incomplete that it would

seem they were still looking for the Messiah and they clearly knew nothing of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7). Paul's next encounter was with a group of Jews, the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest. These men were seeking to do exorcisms in the name of Jesus (Acts 19:8-16). The citizens of Ephesus were so impressed with what happened to these men and with the preaching of Paul that many came to belief. Some who had previously practiced sorcery even burned their books (Acts 19:17-20). During this stay Timothy worked with Paul at Ephesus before being sent by Paul on to Macedonia (Acts 19:21-22). Feeling the pinch of their pocketbooks, the silver-smiths, who made their livelihood selling images of Artemis, instigated a riot that led to Paul's moving on to other fields (Acts 19:23-20:1). Paul's love and concern for the Ephesian church did not end there. As Paul headed along the coast of Asia Minor on his way to Jerusalem, he summoned the elders from that church to meet him at Miletus. Paul warns them of the impending dangers, especially the false teachers, and charges them to watch after the flock (Acts 20:13-38). These dangers facing the church are a recurrent theme whenever the church at Ephesus is mentioned (1 Cor 16:8-9; Eph 4:14, 17-24; 5:6-14; Rev 2:6). The nature of Paul's correspondence with Timothy in the two epistles addressed to him follows this same theme.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF 1 TIMOTHY

Perhaps the greatest contribution 1 Timothy makes is the insight it provides into Paul's view of ministry: his own, that of Timothy, and that of the church (elders/bishops, deacons, women, and believers called to godliness). The church today needs to heed that call to ministry and godliness. Paul's emphasis on prayer (2:8), the demeanor of women in worship (2:9-15), the relationships between the old and the young (5:1-2), the treatment of widows (5:3-16), the response of slaves to their masters and ultimately to the Lord (6:1-2), and

the warning against arrogance and trusting in wealth (6:17–19) produce a book rich in wisdom for the believer.

Paul does warn of needless controversies which do not produce growth. While the “godless myths” (1:4), forbidding of marriage, and enforcing of food laws (4:3) may seem far removed from the issues facing the church today, it is not immune from “an unhealthy interest in controversies and arguments that result in envy, quarreling, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction” (6:4–5). Similarly the modern church should give heed to Paul’s warning against those “who think that godliness is a means to financial gain” (6:5).

OUTLINE

- I. THE SALUTATION – 1:1-2**
- II. PAUL’S CHARGE TO TIMOTHY – 1:3-20**
 - A. The Charge and the False Teachers – 1:3-7**
 - B. The Lawful Use of the Law – 1:8-11**
 - C. Paul’s Own Ministry, A Positive Example – 1:12-17**
 - D. The Negative Example of Hymenaeus and Alexander – 1:18-20**
- III. DIRECTION FOR PUBLIC WORSHIP – 2:1-15**
 - A. Prayers by All for All – 2:1-7**
 - B. Respective Roles of Men and Women – 2:8-15**
- IV. DIRECTIONS FOR CHURCH LEADERS – 3:1-16**
 - A. Qualifications of Bishops/Overseers – 3:1-7**
 - B. Qualifications of Deacons and “Women” – 3:8-13**
 - C. The Basis for These Directions – 3:14-16**
- V. SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR TIMOTHY – 4:1-16**
 - A. The Apostasy Timothy Was to Face – 4:1-5**
 - B. The Discipline of a Good Minister – 4:6-16**
- VI. RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY – 5:1-6:2**
 - A. The Minister and the Church – 5:1-2**
 - B. The Care of Widows – 5:3-16**
 - 1. Family Responsibilities – 5:3-8
 - 2. Widows to Be Enrolled – 5:9-10
 - 3. Younger Widows – 5:11-15
 - 4. Women and Widows – 5:16
 - C. Elders – 5:17-25**
 - D. Slaves – 6:1-2**

VII. FINAL EXHORTATIONS — 6:3-21

A. An Indictment of False Teachers — 6:3-5

B. Godliness, Contentment, and Money — 6:6-10

C. A Charge to Timothy — 6:11-16

D. Instructions for the Rich — 6:17-19

E. Paul's Final Charge to Timothy — 6:20-21