



## The Message of the Bible

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### Week 34: 1, 2 Timothy

First and Second Timothy, along with Titus, are known as the Pastoral Epistles. They are addressed to two men whom Paul had commissioned to minister with the local church. They were obliged to ensure that these churches reflected the apostle's teaching on order and conduct. As such, these books are invaluable to our understanding of the nature of the church, particularly in regard to the doctrine of the church, offices of the church, discipleship within the church, and issues related to countering false teaching within the church.

#### The Teaching of 1 Timothy

##### *The Salutation (1:1–2)*

1. In this case, Paul's apostleship has its source in the commandment of the Lord. Thus, Paul saw his position as of divine origin as well as an obligation to be fulfilled.
2. Interestingly, he uses the phrase "God our Savior." Though not as common as referring to Christ as our Savior, it is certainly not unprecedented (see for example 2:3; Titus 1:3; 2:10; 3:4; Jude 1:25). The phrase emphasizes that our salvation, while procured through Christ, was also the work of God the Father (remember Ephesians 1).
3. Paul addresses his epistle to his beloved Timothy, whom he had led to faith in Christ (cf. 1Cor 4:15–17). It is the personal nature of the letter (as opposed to being addressed to a church) that makes it pastoral.

##### *Withstanding False Teaching and Furthering the Gospel (1:3–20)*

1. Timothy was commissioned as Paul's representative in Ephesus to instruct men to avoid strange doctrine, myths, and endless genealogies. It is difficult to know exactly what these myths and endless genealogies are (but see Titus 1:14), but the timelessness of Paul's teaching on this subject makes identification of these less important.
2. According to Paul, the criterion by which one's teaching was to be evaluated is the life produced by it. That is, correct teaching should result in godly living (v. 5). Thus, although we may be unsure of what this looked like in Ephesus, the principle of the testing of teaching can be applied in any circumstance.
3. In contrast to these men, who were teaching things they really did not understand, Paul gave himself as an example of God's grace that had transformed him and placed him into service. Consider v. 16: "Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in him for eternal life."
4. Paul concludes this section by encouraging Timothy to persevere in the fight (vv. 18–19) and not to be disqualified as others (v. 20).

### *Conduct in the Church (2:1–3:16)*

1. The first issue Paul addresses in regard to the church is the matter of prayer and teaching in the assembly.
  - a. Prayer was to be universal and with the purpose of living such a life before kings and authorities that the Gospel would be spread (2:1–6).
  - b. In regard to the assembly, men were to pray “without wrath and dissension” (2:8), and women were to be clad modestly in regard to the physical but liberally with regard to good works (2:9–10).
  - c. Moreover, in the assembly, Paul lays down a particular demeanor for women, one of quietness and submissiveness. Paul draws this responsibility for husbands from the example of Adam and Eve. The husband, following the example of the one who was created first, bears the responsibility for his family.
2. The second issue Paul addresses is the qualifications of those who “take care of” (3:5) the church, namely, elders.
  - a. Paul commends those who have the desire to be an overseer, because it is certainly a fine work that he desires. At the same time, the church should not be hasty in making a man an elder (see 5:22).
  - b. Desire for oversight must also be matched by character. Although he must excel in many areas where all believers are to grow, he must also be able to lead as well as teach. It is this last characteristic that distinguishes him from a deacon.
  - c. As a side note: There are many opinions about church government in the church today, ranging from no structure to those structured like a corporation. The point I would want to make at this point in our discussion is that there seems to be clear teaching that the local church should be led by a plurality of godly men.
3. Paul then moves to a discussion of another office in the body, that of deacons.
  - a. Deacons, those who are given the responsibility primarily of serving the body, also should be individuals of good repute.
  - b. As with elders, the job of the deacon is commended, because in accomplishing this task well “deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (3:13).
  - c. According to v. 11, a group of “women” must also meet some requirements. These women are normally identified either as the wives of deacons or as deaconesses. Ask your elders which your church believes.
4. Albeit at the end of the discussion, Paul gives clear indication that the things he is writing are intended to be exemplified and protected in the church (3:15). Specific aspects of the doctrine that the church upholds are found in v. 16.

### *Timothy’s Role in Combating False Teaching (4:1–16)*

1. Paul is by no means naïve in thinking that there will be none who stray in the doctrine of the church. Thus, he warns Timothy that apostasy will certainly come with those who pervert the teaching of Scripture.

2. In light of these things, Paul encourages Timothy not only in his task of countering false teaching but also in his responsibility to discipline himself for the purpose of godliness (vv. 7–8).
3. Timothy (and by implication all pastors/elders) should be a living example to the church (v. 12). This requires paying strict attention to one’s character and doctrine (v. 16).
4. Moreover, his obligation in the body was three-fold: (1) publicly reading Scripture, (2) exhorting the church, and (3) teaching the body (v. 13).

*Instructions for Church Life (5:1–6:2)*

1. Timothy is instructed in how to treat various members of the congregation (5:1–2).
2. Widows in the church are receive special attention (5:3–16). Paul gives specific instructions to the church, the widow’s family, as well as to widows themselves. Paul uses this as an opportunity to emphasize one’s obligation to his own family (5:8).
3. Paul seems to lay down the principle that some elders should be financially supported by the church, particularly those who are most involved in teaching and preaching.
4. At the same time, elder are worthy of honor in how accusations against them are treated. Just as they are to receive twice as much support for their teaching, accusations against them require twice as many witnesses. If found to be wrong, they are to be publicly rebuked for the sake of the body.

*Final Admonitions (6:3–19)*

1. In his concluding warnings, Paul returns to false teachers, particularly to the greed that accompanies them (vv. 3–10).
2. Being rich is not improper, but those who are rich should not be conceited or overly dependent upon something that is uncertain. Rather, riches should be accompanied by abundant good works and generosity. As such, their riches become a means for producing spiritual treasure.
3. These things that characterize false teachers should be desperately avoided by Timothy (6:11–16).

*The Epilogue (6:20–21)*

## **The Purpose of 1 Timothy**

Paul exhorted and instructed Timothy (and the Ephesian church) to stop the influence of false teachers and restore order in the Church.

In some ways, 1 Timothy functions as an instruction manual to a young pastor and overseer.

## **The Teaching of 2 Timothy**

*The Salutation (1:1–2)*

1. Paul again identifies himself to Timothy as an apostle, but in this case, his apostleship is according to “the will of God” (v. 1).

2. The love Paul has for Timothy is evident in his address to him as “beloved son” (v. 2; see also v. 4).

#### *Opening Thanksgiving (1:3–5)*

1. Paul knew the spiritual reputation of Timothy and his family very well.
2. Thus, he was confident that Timothy’s faith was “sincere.”

#### *Exhortations in View of Paul’s Impending Death (1:6–4:5)*

1. Timothy should not be ashamed of the Gospel but should suffer on its behalf because it is “from all eternity” (v. 9) and has now been revealed in Christ (v. 10). This Gospel has been entrusted to Timothy and must therefore be maintained.
2. Just as the truth was passed from faithful Paul to faithful Timothy, Timothy must also entrust it to faithful men (2:2).
3. During times of trouble that are certain to come, it is the truths of the Gospel that are to be retained and remembered (see 2:8–13). As a result, one will know why and for what he is suffering.
4. Thus, a faithful servant of the Word will consistently remind the church of these things in a manner of patience and gentleness, leaving the result to God (2:14–26).
5. Yet, there will always be those who will not listen to sound teaching and/or correction. Such people are to be avoided (3:1–9).
6. In contrast, Timothy should follow the teaching of Paul, that has been proven true by his conduct and suffering (3:10–13).
7. Moreover, Timothy should heed this Gospel because it is grounded in and consistent with the teaching of the Old Testament (3:14–17). As such, they lead to salvation and maturity.
8. In conclusion, then, the task is straightforward: “preach the word” (4:2). Yet, the word should be preached consistently and patiently even when people do not desire it (4:3–5).

#### *Paul’s Personal Notes to Timothy (4:6–22)*

1. Paul knew that his life and ministry were coming to an end, but he also knew that he had persevered with faithfulness.
2. Paul concludes his letter to Timothy with specific personal notes and requests. Not the least of these is his request for the Scriptures (v. 13).

### **The Purpose of 2 Timothy**

“The epistle is little concerned with ecclesiastical arrangements but concentrates on Timothy and the task which is being committed to him. The apostle is in a reminiscent mood, and for this reason his concluding epistle is the most revealing of the three pastorals.”<sup>1</sup>

Paul appealed for Timothy to carry on the ministry of the Gospel after Paul’s death.

### **How should I respond?**

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<sup>1</sup> Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 649.