

Through The Bible
Session #53 – 1st and 2nd Timothy
November 16, 2005

The Timothy correspondence is part of a grouping of letters known as the “Pastoral Epistles.”

- Also included is the letter to Titus.
- The letters were written to co-workers of Paul to help them in their pastoral duties.
- Good summary of the purpose of the pastoral epistles comes in 1st Timothy 3:14-15 which says...¹⁴I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, ¹⁵if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth.
- The letters focus on the details of the Christian ethical life, both its personal and social dimensions.
- The letters argue for a certain way of living so they are an exhortation for people to live a certain way – the Christian way.

Why do people need an exhortation or encouragement in how to live?

- There appears to be a deviation.
- Heresy on theological and ethical levels.

Authorship

- For centuries, the pastoral epistles were thought to be genuinely Pauline – Paul wrote them.
- Since the 18th century, scholars have debated whether Paul wrote them or not.
- The letters seem to use Paul’s name more than Colossians and Ephesians, yet they present some ideas that Paul doesn’t promote elsewhere. It seems the author urgently wants the author to believe the letters are Pauline.
- If Paul didn’t write them, who did?
- Author intent on identifying with Paul.
- Author was in midst of deep controversy in the church. Disorder and disharmony prevalent in the church.
- Author was convinced his opponents were teaching a version of Christianity not Christian.
- Author feels the church is in social and theological disarray.

What about this heresy? What were these false teachings?

- False teachers claimed resurrections of Christians already happened (2nd Timothy 2:18).
- There’s a warning against knowledge (1st Timothy 6:20) which sounds like some version of Gnosticism.

- False teachers forbid marriage and say you can't eat certain foods (1st Timothy 4:1-5).
- 1st Timothy 1:9-10 says these false teachers were promoting a killing of parents, slavery, etc. We should perhaps not take this accusation quite literally but rather see it as a way the author is using to describe the false teachers as evil. The author is not unbiased or shy about feelings for these false teachers!
- According to Titus 1:10-16, these false teachers were Jewish or had Jewish tendencies.

When were the letters written?

- Scholars who don't think Paul wrote them would date the pastoral epistles somewhere between AD 95 and AD 110.
- Timothy is in Ephesus, Titus is in Crete, and Paul is understood to be in Prison in Rome.

How are Pastoral Letters used today?

- Helpful on several fronts: (a) church order; (b) Christian ethics.
- Order – spirituality is always a messy endeavor. Undue chaos in a church can be destructive. The emphasis is on responsible handling of the concerns and teachings of the church.
- Ethics – the pastoral letters offer models for living the Christian life. A companion teaching to what we find here should be Matthew 5-7, the Sermon on the Mount.