

1 TIMOTHY

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In Lystra, while on his second missionary tour, Paul found Timothy, who was already a well-known disciple in the area (Acts 16:1-2). He quickly became one of Paul's closest friends and trusted companions. Timothy appears in Paul's letters more than twice the number of times of anyone else, and his name is mentioned in all of Paul's letters except four, plus once in Hebrews and six times in Acts.

We know only a few things about Timothy's personal life. He was born to a Greek father and Jewish mother (Acts 16:1). He was young, but how young is unknown (1 Timothy 4:12). He seemed to have been sick frequently (1 Timothy 5:23). He suffered a major period of spiritual depression at one point that left him nearly ready to quit the ministry (2 Timothy 1:6-8).

Contrary to popular opinion (too often reinforced in sermons), Timothy was not a pastor or elder of a local church; rather, he was Paul's personal representative and an apostle.¹ Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus when he went on to Macedonia to continue the work there (1 Timothy 1:3), yet planned to rejoin Timothy back in Ephesus (3:14; 4:13). Since this event does not line up with Luke's timeline in Acts, it is probable that this took place after Paul's imprisonment in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). This means that both of his letters to Timothy were written after the book of Acts, probably in A.D. 64-66, before Paul's final imprisonment and death in Rome. The purpose of this letter was to clarify the instructions and task that he had left for Timothy to accomplish in his absence. It seems as if Timothy may have written Paul with some questions that Paul needed to answer as well.

Chapter one begins with a slight modification of Paul's traditional greeting. With only the two letters to Timothy as the exception, Paul always offered "grace and peace" to his readers, combining the normal Greek and Hebrew salutations, respectively. To Timothy, though, he offered "GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE" (vs. 2). It is possible that he included "mercy" because of the difficulty of the work in Ephesus and Timothy's weaker tendencies. In fact, Timothy faced a situation that would become confrontational, as he had to stop false teachers in the church, about whom Paul warned the Ephesian elders a few years earlier (vs. 3-7; Acts 20:28-30). Apparently, they wanted to place the Gentile church under the Mosaic Law, something Paul had fought from the beginning of his ministry (vs. 8-11).²

Paul connected to the theme of mercy by reminding Timothy of Paul's own past (vs. 12-17). Even though he "WAS FORMERLY A BLASPHEMER AND A PERSECUTOR, AND AN ARROGANT MAN," God treated him with

¹ There were two types of apostles in the early Church. The Twelve were those who ministered alongside Jesus and saw his death and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). Other apostles besides the Twelve included James (Jesus' half-brother and Lead Pastor in Jerusalem; Galatians 1:19), Paul (Acts 9:15; Galatians 2:8), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2:7), among others.

² The entire letter of Galatians was written to combat this false teaching, and Paul had to fight it everywhere he went, as shown in several of his other letters as well.

mercy for one primary reason: so that he could be an example demonstrating “FOR THOSE WHO ARE GOING TO BELIEVE IN HIM FOR ETERNAL LIFE” that God can save anyone.

Paul concluded this opening chapter by charging Timothy with his task: “FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT,” a military theme that permeates both letters (vs. 18–20). This would require him to “HOLD FIRMLY TO FAITH AND A GOOD CONSCIENCE.” There were those in the Ephesian church who had already shipwrecked their faith, and Paul did not want Timothy to suffer the same fate.

Chapter two begins the actual instructions or clarifications that Timothy needed to finish his task. “FIRST OF ALL,” he needed to make sure that the local assemblies prayed for “ALL PEOPLE, EVEN FOR KINGS AND ALL WHO ARE IN AUTHORITY” (vs. 1–8). These prayers had two goals. First, praying for the authorities would affect how the believers lived, leading to a more “PEACEFUL AND QUIET LIFE.” Second, praying for all people would result in people coming to believe in Jesus and “A KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH,” namely, that Jesus is the only mediator between God and man. Because of this, Paul wanted the men of the various assemblies to pray for their nation and their community regularly.

It is important to note at this point that Paul spent much of this letter giving instructions to various distinct groups of people within the local churches, starting with the “MEN.” The fact that he specified that men were to pray did not mean that women were not allowed to, as 1 Corinthians 11:5 shows (written about a decade earlier). However, it is a duty of men, in their God-given roles as leaders in their families, congregations, communities, and even politics, that they should intentionally pray for these areas when they are gathered together. The comment that this should be done “WITHOUT ANGER OR DISPUTE” could show that Paul was addressing a specific issue with a timeless principle. Since it was the men who usually filled government and other public roles, Paul thought that praying together as believers would certainly help influence their communities for Christ.

The second group that Paul addressed was the “WOMEN” (vs. 9–15). This paragraph is often maligned by those who mistakenly think that Paul was misogynistic and chauvinistic. In reality, he offered great latitude toward believing women and had several of them serve alongside him in his ministry. Even so, he strongly believed in the God-designed order for men and women, and his Holy Spirit-inspired letters kept that balance.

Godly women, he wrote, should “DRESS . . . WITH MODESTY AND SELF-CONTROL.” The mention of “self-control” may indicate that some of the women in Ephesus were disrupting the meetings, possibly similar to Paul’s warning about the men’s anger. In response, Paul gave principles for all believing women. They are to be identified and defined by their good deeds rather than outward adornment. Paul’s command that he did “NOT ALLOW A WOMAN TO TEACH OR EXERCISE AUTHORITY OVER A MAN” has been widely debated and often dismissed. While some see this to be a cultural issue in Ephesus that has no bearing on our modern culture, this does not fit the entire context, since he referred to creation for his support.³ Women are not to take teaching or leadership positions over men in the congregation. Constable notes, “The verbs ‘teach’ and

³ This is a great example of the apostle showing that he understood the first chapters of Genesis to be literal and historical events. To build such a controversial topic on a myth or legend (as many read Genesis 1–11 today) would undermine everything that Paul taught.

‘exercise authority’ are in the present tense in the Greek text, which implies a continuing ministry rather than a single instance of ministry.”⁴ Because of the inherent roles in creation and because of Eve’s being deceived, Paul supernaturally concluded that this was the natural order in the Christian assembly.

Verse 15 is also often misunderstood, as many believe it limits women to be nothing more than “baby-making machines.” This is considered a difficult verse, unfortunately, because of our English translations. The key is found in the two verbs, “be delivered” and “continue.” Some translations make them both singular – “SHE WILL BE DELIVERED . . . IF SHE CONTINUES” (NET, HCSB) – while others make both verbs plural – “THEY WILL BE DELIVERED . . . IF THEY CONTINUE” (NASB, NLT, NIV). Of the major translations, only the KJV and ESV most accurately reflect the Greek text – “SHE WILL BE DELIVERED [SINGULAR] . . . IF THEY CONTINUE [PLURAL].”

In the context, “she” goes back to Eve from verse 14, while “they” refers to the Christian women Paul was writing to in verse 9. Even though Eve was deceived, bringing God’s curse of a natural struggle against male leadership upon her and all women, she (and her gender) can be delivered from this curse. Rather than spending her life being deceived, like Eve, and usurping roles that she was never designed to fulfill, Eve (representing all women) “WILL BE DELIVERED” from this spiritual struggle by focusing on how God did design her – a nurturer and giver of life. Even for those women who cannot bear children or are past the age of childbearing, the nurture and life they give to others around them – whether men, women, or children – can be done out of “FAITH AND LOVE AND HOLINESS WITH SELF-CONTROL.” This is far from saying that women have no role in the church. On the contrary, this gives them great responsibility and freedom to serve within their God-given design and help deliver one another from the consequences of Eve’s sin, as they learn to walk in step with the Holy Spirit.

Chapter three continues Paul’s instructions for specific groups in the local church, continuing with the elders (vs. 1-7). In the New Testament, the terms “overseer” and “shepherd” describe the main functions of the elders, i.e., they rule over the congregation and protect it (like fathers of a family, vs. 5). Contrary to what many Bible colleges and seminaries may teach, the eldership is not something that a man should wait to see if he is called to. The apostle said that eldership is something worth desiring. It is acceptable for a man to “ASPIRE TO THE OFFICE OF OVERSEER.”

The verses describing a local church elder can be taken too strongly or too lightly. On the one hand, these are often called “requirements” or “qualifications” to be an elder. If this were the case, then no one would be qualified, because no one meets these perfectly. On the other hand, if we consider these only “ideals” but nothing more, then they might as well have never been written, because, again, there is no ideal elder. Rather, it is best to see these as “character traits” that the elders live out as an example to the congregation.⁵ Understanding that elders are not perfect, yet expecting them to be spiritually mature leaders, finds that balance. As such, this list could be read as “characterized by being ABOVE REPROACH . . . characterized

⁴ Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Timothy*, 2016 edition, 33. Constable’s notes on the whole Bible are available for free at www.soniclight.com/constable/notes.htm.

⁵ It has been noted by several writers that, with the exception of “ABLE TO TEACH,” each of these character traits is found elsewhere in the New Testament for all believers. They are not exclusive to elders, but elders should lead the way as examples of what godliness looks like.

by being NOT CONTENTIOUS,” etc. This also helps gain the proper interpretation of the often-misunderstood “HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE” item. When the Greek phrase is read literally and understood as a character quality, we discover that an elder should be “characterized by being a one-woman type of man,” whether he is married or not.⁶

“DEACONS” are the second group of church leaders Paul mentioned and the only other official role given in Scripture for local congregations (vs. 8-13). In a list similar to the elders, Paul gave character traits for these godly servants. The specific mention of “NOT TWO-FACED . . . HOLDING TO THE MYSTERY OF THE FAITH” seems to indicate some kind of teaching or counseling ministry with people in the congregation. Deacons are also supposed to “BE TESTED FIRST” before being appointed to this role. Like elders, they should have godly marriages and families (if they are married and have children).⁷

The mention of “women” or “wives” in verse 11 is also widely debated. The two obvious interpretations are either female deacons or the wives of deacons. We do not deny that the Church has historically had women serving alongside deacons, but what their exact role was has not always been clear. Some see Paul’s reference to Phoebe in Romans 16:1 to mean that she was a deaconess in Cenchrea, but this is a stretch, grammatically. Additionally, Constable observes that it would be odd for Paul to qualify deacons’ wives but not elders’ wives. (To say that he meant this to apply to wives of both elders and deacons does not explain why they are mentioned in the middle of his instructions about deacons.) Given Paul’s instructions to them, it is sufficient to say that these women did exert some influence in the congregation, so they were to do so faithfully and with dignity, keeping their tongues in check.

In the final three verses closing the first half of the letter, Paul made clear the confession to which Timothy and the believers should hold fast (1:18) and should drive the ministry in Ephesus (vs. 14-16). First, the church is “THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD”; thus, believers are called to live to a higher standard. Second, the church is “THE SUPPORT AND BULWARK OF THE TRUTH”; thus, our teaching and doctrine must be pure. Third, our message to the world centers on the Eternal Son who became flesh and who will ultimately finish his work after the Church has completed ours.

Chapter four is different from the other chapters around it because Paul broke from his instructions to groups so he could focus on Timothy again. In this chapter, he gave Timothy three sets of warnings or encouragements. First, Timothy was to watch out for false teaching that would arise within the congregation (vs. 1-5).⁸ Even though elders and deacons should have godly character traits, Paul had already warned the original Ephesian elders that “wolves” would enter the congregation from within their own body (Acts

⁶ There are some scholars who believe that an elder is required to married and have children so he can fulfill these “requirements.” Another common misinterpretation is that he must never have been divorced (either before or after salvation). Some go so far as to say that he may not have been remarried for any reason, even if his first wife had died. None of these meet the interpretation given above.

⁷ The best writings I have seen on this topic are Alexander Strauch’s books, *Biblical Eldership* and *The New Testament Deacon*. We use these in our church and highly recommend them.

⁸ This is another clue that Timothy was not one of the elders of the Ephesian church. Paul tasked him, not only with selecting and training the elders, but also with keeping their doctrine in check. It seems that he was not the primary teacher in the church, even though he did teach.

20:28-30), and as Paul's representative there, it was Timothy's job to help purge these false teachers from the congregation. The description Paul gave Timothy reveals men who had forsaken the truth of Scripture for sensational teachings that, ultimately, come from demons. As innocuous as they sound, they include teachings even about marriage and food, often focusing on what is forbidden in an ascetic way. In Colossians 2:16-23 Paul wrote that we are not obligated to such unscriptural restrictions.

Second, Timothy was to guard himself and his teaching carefully, so that he did not get caught up in such heresies, even unintentionally (vs. 6-10). Paul noted that even in the first century there were those who focused on their physical health to the neglect of their spiritual health. While physical health does some good in this life, spiritual health is eternal and must be our priority. Paul's comment that God "IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY OF BELIEVERS," points to the fact that no one is outside of God's ability to save. The concept that only a special, elect group can or will be saved is contrary to Paul's teaching.

Third, Timothy was to both "COMMAND AND TEACH THESE THINGS" (vs. 11-16). Apparently, there were some in the church who had dismissed him as their local apostle because of his youth. Paul told him not to let that stop his work there. Instead, he was to be an example of all these things already mentioned, even to the elders of the local congregations. He was to make this his life's focus, and it would be beneficial not only for him but everyone in his care.

Chapter five returns to instructions about certain groups in the church, specifically widows and elders. The church is to be a family of families, meaning that we should relate to each other as fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters (vs. 1-16). Like one would take care of an aging grandparent, Paul said that the congregation is responsible for widows in their church family, but only under certain conditions. First, if the widow has family still living, they are responsible for her, not the church. Second, only older widows are to be included in this care program. Paul specified "SIXTY YEARS OLD" (vs. 9), but this could be considered descriptive rather than prescriptive, due to cultural life expectancies.⁹ Third, she was to be "THE WIFE OF ONE HUSBAND" (vs. 9). This phrase is the exact opposite of an elder's "HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE" character trait (see chapter three), meaning that she was "characterized by being a one-man type of woman." Fourth, she was to be an example of godliness.

Paul specifically commanded that younger widows were not to be accepted "ON THE LIST" (vs. 11-15). Rather, he said they should remarry and fulfill their roles as described in 2:9-15. In a statement that could have been written today, Paul noted that younger women with no responsibilities and full financial provision "LEARN TO BE LAZY, AND . . . ALSO GOSSIPS AND BUSYBODIES." Although this may seem harsh or unfair, every civilization can verify its accuracy.

Another reason Paul wanted younger widows to remarry had to do with a "FORMER PLEDGE." It seems that the church's provision for older widows was a kind of remuneration for devoted service to the congregation. Because these women had no families and were characteristically godly servants, it is possible that they pledged themselves to their congregation. Early church history shows that this is where the Catholic practice

⁹ For instance, if a culture had a life expectancy rate for women of 55 years old, waiting to help widows until they turned 60 would drastically cut down on a church's benevolence expenses, but it would probably violate the spirit of what Paul taught here.

of nuns derived. However, it also may refer to the “women” in 3:11. If so, this group of widows probably served alongside the elders and deacons, probably in ministry toward women.¹⁰

In verses 17–25 Paul gave additional instruction about the elders, this time concerning the congregation’s financial support for them. Many people believe that elders should not be paid by the church, but this passage clearly disputes that notion. First, Paul quoted from both Deuteronomy 25:4 (Moses) and Luke 10:7 (Jesus) to prove that the one who works should receive payment for his work. Even animals get that much. Second, Paul used the same Greek word (τιμή, *timē*) to describe how the congregation treated both widows (vs. 3) and elders (vs. 17). Because this word means both “honor” (non-financial) and “compensation” (financial), some argue that elders should only be honored but not paid. However, since the word obviously means compensation for widows, and the immediate context is payment for work done, it must mean compensation for elders as well. Elders should be taken care of by those they serve, especially those “**WHO WORK HARD IN SPEAKING AND TEACHING,**” because it does not allow as much time for another form of work to provide for his family.¹¹

However, lest anyone think that this elevates elders to a level of “untouchable” clergy, Paul told Timothy that elders were still subject to discipline for sin, just like any other congregation member, and that their discipline should be public within the congregation, “**AS A WARNING TO THE REST**” of the seriousness of sin. Thus, elders will be examples, either for good or bad. For this reason, elders should be appointed carefully and slowly. Paul’s mention of Timothy’s stomach ailments at this point (with no other medical context) may indicate that Timothy’s role in choosing and appointing elders was a stressful and difficult process for him.

Chapter six addresses three more specific groups within the church and Timothy himself again. First, Paul gave instructions for slaves (vs. 1–2). Similar to the instructions in Ephesians 6:5–7 (written just a couple of years earlier), Paul told Timothy that Christian slaves should respect their masters and work well for them because this glorifies God and keeps a good reputation in the community. For those who have “**BELIEVING MASTERS,**” this is true “**ALL THE MORE.**” Sadly, it appears that it was common then as it is now for Christians to treat unbelievers better than their fellow believers in the business world.

Second, Paul addressed those who would spread “**FALSE TEACHINGS AND . . . NOT AGREE WITH SOUND WORDS . . . AND WITH THE TEACHING THAT ACCORDS WITH GODLINESS**” (vs. 3–10). It seems that then, like now, “health and wealth” theology (the “Prosperity Gospel”) was prevalent. Paul warned Timothy not to get involved with it and to warn the believers to stay away from it as well. It is nothing more than idolatry, loving money more than God, and it always destroys one’s faith.

Third, Paul returned to his original encouragement to Timothy, that he should not give up (vs. 11–16). It would be a struggle, one that Paul was familiar with, but Timothy – and we – could do it when we place our full trust in Christ and rest in him.

¹⁰ In the churches that had a role of deaconess, some of their tasks were to help prepare women for baptism, childbirth, etc.

¹¹ This distinction that some elders will “**WORK HARD IN SPEAKING AND TEACHING**” reveals that within a team of elders in a local church, different men will have different responsibilities. Some will teach more than others, and they should receive a higher wage than the others. This also implies that all elders should receive at least some compensation for their ministry.

Finally, Paul closed with a few words to those “WHO ARE RICH IN THIS WORLD’S GOODS” (vs. 17-19). His comments about the “Prosperity Gospel” were not intended to be a condemnation on wealth itself or those who have it. Money is a tool, and Paul made sure to tell wealthy believers to use it to help build God’s Church and enjoy what God has allowed them to have. What we do in this life is the foundation for our relationship with God and reward in the next.

2 TIMOTHY

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Probably within about two years after writing 1 Timothy, Paul was once again arrested and taken to Rome. This would be his final journey because he was beheaded there under Nero's growing persecution of Christians and Christianity. Paul wrote 2 Timothy from a Roman prison around A.D. 66, the last preserved writing we have from his hand and possibly the last letter he ever wrote.

Second Timothy is a personal farewell note from an old mentor to his young friend and colleague, his son in the Christian faith, a man who was ready to throw in the towel himself as he watched everything they had worked for seemingly going up in smoke. Paul's final few words (only 644 in the Greek text) were full of encouragement and anticipation, not regret or remorse, as he said goodbye until they would meet again in Heaven.

Chapter one opens with Paul's modified greeting for Timothy – "GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE" – to the man who needed to remember all three of them (vs. 1-2).¹ For the last time, Paul identified himself as "AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS BY THE WILL OF GOD," faithfully obeying his commission even to death.

Knowing the turmoil in Timothy's heart, the "TEARS" that he must have shed knowing that he may never see Paul again, the old apostle reminded him of the work that they were doing and the promises of God (vs. 3-14). He reminded Timothy that "GOD DID NOT GIVE US A SPIRIT OF FEAR," so he was not to be afraid of what was about to happen and "NOT BE ASHAMED OF" God's word or God's man, Paul. He reminded Timothy that God was "THE ONE WHO SAVED US AND CALLED US WITH A HOLY CALLING" into ministry because of his grace and for his own glory, so he wanted Timothy to "HOLD TO THE STANDARD OF SOUND WORDS" and "PROTECT THAT GOOD THING ENTRUSTED TO" Timothy.

Paul also gave him some good news, showing that not all was lost (vs. 15-18). One of their dear friends, Onesiphorus, tracked down Paul when he arrived in Rome so he could minister to Paul in his final days. Unfortunately, others did not, namely, Phygelus and Hermogenes from "THE PROVINCE OF ASIA" (modern Turkey), where Timothy was located at Ephesus.

Chapter two continues with a few analogies, a few commands, and a few reminders. First, Paul used the analogies of a soldier and a farmer to illustrate the focus required to serve God well (vs. 1-7). Just like a soldier cannot be concerned with things around him when he is in training or battle, so Timothy must not let his circumstances take him off mission. Just like a farmer receives the first benefit of his labor in the fields, so Timothy would receive great reward for his ministry if he remained faithful and did not quit. Knowing that all of us have only temporary commissions, Paul encouraged Timothy to faithfully pass on the truth to a new generation – as Paul did to Timothy – who could continue to pass it along faithfully to others.

¹ See the notes on 1 Timothy 1 for further explanation about this greeting.

Second, lest Timothy think (like the readers of Hebrews) that quitting now would not affect his spiritual life and reward, Paul reminded him that there is more at stake than our current comfort – the others who still “MAY OBTAIN SALVATION IN CHRIST JESUS AND ITS ETERNAL GLORY” (vs. 8-13). The promise is true that those who remain faithful will finally be rewarded for their faithfulness. However, “SINCE HE CANNOT DENY HIMSELF,” Jesus will have to punish those who do not remain faithful, and they will lose their reward because he is always faithful.

Third, Paul told Timothy to remind those in his charge to stay true to the Scriptures (vs. 14-19). The false teachers Paul addressed in 1 Timothy were apparently still at work, arguing with “PROFANE CHATTER” that was useless to everyone. He wanted Timothy to keep from getting drawn into it, “BECAUSE THOSE OCCUPIED WITH IT WILL STRAY FURTHER AND FURTHER INTO UNGODLINESS.” Paul accused two men by name, calling them out for “UNDERMINING SOME PEOPLE’S FAITH.” Only by being diligent to handle the Scriptures carefully can one guarantee his ministry will be approved by God.

Finally, Paul charged Timothy to keep himself pure, which will help him keep his doctrine pure (vs. 20-26). His job was to teach the truth and correct opponents to the truth, with gentleness, not getting dragged into useless arguments that would help no one. This, Paul thought, was the method God may use to bring them “TO THEIR SENSES AND ESCAPE THE DEVIL’S TRAP” of questioning, replacing, and finally denying God’s expressed word.

Chapter three begins with a sad look at the state of the Church which is falling further and further from Christ (vs. 1-9). This passage is often used to describe the modern world in which we live, and there are certain similarities. However, it is more accurately a description of the Church that is influenced by the world. Most people of the world have no interest in maintaining even “THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE OF RELIGION,” although some certainly do. This is true of many believers, though. Verses 6-9 seem to refer to false teachers who prey on weak and young believers, especially young women who are easily deceived (see 1 Timothy 2:9-15; 5:11-14). Where this falling away will end is unclear, but some believe that the true Church will almost be gone by the Rapture.²

In the face of such blatant heresy, Paul commanded Timothy to “CONTINUE IN THE THINGS [HE HAD] LEARNED AND [HAD BECOME] CONFIDENT ABOUT” (vs. 10-17). As he regularly did, Paul pointed to himself as an example whom Timothy had observed and followed. Just like Jesus had told the Eleven that the world would hate them as his followers (John 15:18-21), Paul told Timothy that following Jesus in this world means persecution in this world. None of that, though, is stronger than the inspired Word of God, which is designed and fully capable of equipping God’s people for God’s work.

Chapter four is a template for leaving this life well. First, Paul charged Timothy with his critical work – “PREACH THE MESSAGE . . . WHETHER IT IS CONVENIENT OR NOT, REPROVE, REBUKE, EXHORT . . . BE SELF-CONTROLLED . . .

² See the notes on 2 Thessalonians 2 for more detail about the “falling away” that Paul prophesied there.

ENDURE HARDSHIP, DO AN EVANGELIST'S WORK, FULFILL YOUR MINISTRY" (vs. 1-8).³ Paul knew that Timothy's struggle would seem impossible, because many are not interested in hearing the truth, only myths and things that satisfy their own curiosity but do not lead to spiritual growth and maturity. Paul could do no more. Challenging Timothy to continue to "FIGHT THE GOOD FIGHT" (1 Timothy 1:18), Paul believed that he had, and his most cherished thought was his soon meeting with the Savior.

Paul's final wish on this Earth was to see his friend once more before he died (vs. 9-22). Whether or not Timothy ever made it to Rome, we do not know. Paul asked for his cloak, as it was approaching winter, and his dungeon likely had no heat. He also asked for his "SCROLLS, ESPECIALLY THE PARCHMENTS." Although we cannot be sure, it seems possible that these may have been some of his personal copies of the Scriptures. Paul must have felt lonely, as so many others were busy in ministry or doing other things. Some had even simply deserted him. He sent his warmest greetings to a few friends that Timothy would see on his way to Paul. He also asked that Timothy would bring Mark with him, another wonderful friend that time and maturity, in both men, had developed. Above all, the old apostle was still "CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING" (Philippians 1:6, NASB):

"THE LORD WILL DELIVER ME FROM EVERY EVIL DEED
AND WILL BRING ME SAFELY INTO HIS HEAVENLY KINGDOM.
TO HIM BE GLORY FOR EVER AND EVER! AMEN."

³ As a silly comparison, this section always reminds me of "The Empire Strikes Back," when Yoda and Obi-Wan Kenobi were talking to the young Luke Skywalker, who was rushing into an impossible situation. "Be careful...don't let the Dark Side take you...stay strong in the Force."

TITUS

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Titus is one of three letters Paul wrote specifically to individual co-workers in his ministry. (The others were both to Timothy. Philemon was not a co-worker.) Although he is never mentioned in the book of Acts, we can piece together some information about Titus from 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and 2 Timothy. Before Paul left him on the island of Crete, Titus served as an itinerant apostle under the authority of Paul in Corinth and Dalmatia (northeast of Macedonia, in modern Croatia).

Luke does not tell anything of Paul's ministry in Crete in the book of Acts, so it is best to assume that this took place after Paul's release from Rome around A.D. 62. He had about two years to do more travel and ministry before his final arrest and death. It was during this time that he began the churches in Crete and wrote his letters to Timothy and Titus. It seems that Paul's ministry in Crete was either cut short by an outside force or he intentionally left so he could move on to other things. In either case, he left Titus there to continue the ministry, building on the foundation they had started.

The theme of Titus has to do with Christian ministry, namely the good works we are to do in light of Christian faith and doctrine.

Chapter one introduces Titus' mission and the purpose of the letter. Paul began with an introduction that does not match any of his other letters (vs. 1-4). Rather than focusing on his role as an apostle of the gospel, Paul emphasized his work in furthering believers' faith and gave a unique description of his message. Probably knowing his time was short, Paul focused on the eternal faithfulness of God, "WHO DOES NOT LIE," and the truth that he made "EVIDENT" through the message Paul preached. This may indicate that Paul spent much of his last few years building on his previous work, strengthening the saints, rather than starting churches in new areas. Even his work in Ephesus (Acts 18-19) was primarily toward teaching the believers who could then start and grow churches without him.

Titus' mission on Crete was to finish establishing the local churches, presumably that he and Paul started. The most pressing task was to appoint the elders to lead each church (vs. 5).¹⁵ Paul gave Titus a specific set of qualifications for these elders (vs. 6-9). Some are similar to the list in 1 Timothy 3, focusing on the personal character traits of the men, but the emphasis in Titus is more on the men's doctrinal integrity and teaching capability. The reason for this emphasis was two-fold. First, there seems to have been widespread false doctrine being taught on Crete, and the local elders needed to be able to refute it and teach sound doctrine

¹⁵ Notice that even in Paul's absence, the congregations did not choose their own elders. The initial elders were always appointed by the apostles and were always a plurality in each congregation. After the initial appointment, the elders were to train new elders to replace themselves (like the apostles trained elders to replace themselves, 2 Timothy 2:2). The Scripture never shows a congregational vote to determine the leadership of any local church.

(vs. 10-14). Second, for Paul, false doctrine was directly related to lack of good works (vs. 15-16). This was evident in the lives of the false teachers and the lives of those following their false doctrine.

Chapter two picks up the theme of good works from chapter one. Rather than false doctrine, Titus was to “COMMUNICATE THE BEHAVIOR THAT GOES WITH SOUND TEACHING” (vs. 1). The word translated “sound” means “healthy.” Paul used it eight times, all in 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus and all related to correct doctrine, except Titus 1:13 and 2:2, where it refers to a healthy Christian faith.¹⁶ However, even those are in the context of sound doctrine and reliant on it.

Paul elaborated on what the results of healthy doctrine should look like by giving specific behavioral instructions to various groups within the local churches. He commanded that “**OLDER MEN**” and “**OLDER WOMEN**” (probably both physically and spiritually) were to have godly lives worth imitating and be integrally involved in the training of those younger men and women, respectively, who are coming behind them (vs. 2-5). Notice that the characteristics Paul laid on these older saints are similar to those for elders, even for those who may never be elders.

Modern believers and unbelievers alike often take issue with Paul’s instructions for the older women (vs. 4-5). The notion that “**YOUNGER WOMEN**” are responsible to “[FULFILL] THEIR DUTIES AT HOME” and be “**SUBJECT TO THEIR OWN HUSBANDS**” seems out-dated and even oppressive. They argue that women today are more empowered and have responsibilities outside the home. Husbands are to share equally in the household responsibilities instead of leaving them for the woman. Unfortunately, this is based on a twisted and unbiblical view of equality and has led to the weakening of the household structure, even in Christian families, which has, in turn, affected the Church at large. Paul said that when our homes are not working properly, “**THE MESSAGE OF GOD MAY...BE DISCREDITED.**”

As Paul’s apostolic representative to Crete, it was Titus’ responsibility both to model and teach these behaviors to the believers (vs. 6-8). Additionally, Christian slaves were to act faithfully in full subjection to their masters (vs. 9-10).¹⁷ When the church members lived out these commands, antagonists to true Christian doctrine and the Christian faith would not have any ammunition to discredit Christianity.

The last few verses of chapter two again emphasize the importance of godly living, this time in the context of Jesus’ return to rapture his Church (vs. 11-14). The story of God’s grace is more than just salvation from the eternal penalty of sin. It also serves to instruct us in the way of living properly during this life. Most of what Christians call “struggles” are simply “**GODLESS WAYS AND WORLDLY DESIRES**” (vs. 12) that the Christian has refused “**TO REJECT.**”¹⁸ The outworking of God’s grace and the anticipation of Jesus’ imminent return should not only be sufficient for God’s people to live God’s way (2 Corinthians 12:9), it should drive us in that lifestyle, causing us to be “**EAGER TO DO GOOD**” for the Savior.

Much like he did with Timothy (1 Timothy 4:12), Paul had to encourage Titus to not give up in the face of others rejecting him (vs. 15). Titus may have been a younger man who was sometimes intimidated

¹⁶ 1 Timothy 1:10; 6:3; 2 Timothy 1:13; 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; 2:1, 2. The only other New Testament uses of the word are Luke 5:31; 7:10; 15:27 and 3 John 2 (all referring to physical health).

¹⁷ See the notes on Philemon for information about slavery in Paul’s letters.

¹⁸ Paul explained how to do this in Romans 6.

by those older than he was or maybe he shied away from confrontation, to the detriment of his ministry. Church leadership and disciple-making both sometimes require hard conversations with those we are trying to lead. In this case, Titus had “FULL AUTHORITY,” and Paul urged him to confidently and wisely use the appropriate methods to get his message across.

Chapter three concludes this short letter with two more exhortations to godly living. Building on the practical situations from chapter two, which were focused on our actions toward fellow believers, the first few verses of chapter three show that this extends to unbelievers and even governing officials as well (vs. 1-2). It seems that part of Paul’s normal teaching was that Christians are not to be trouble-makers in this world. Instead, by praying for our governing officials and living out our increasing godliness, we will often enjoy peaceful, tranquil lives (1 Thessalonians 4:9-12; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

The reason for this lifestyle was always the result and reflection of God’s salvation and grace that we have received (vs. 3-7). “FOR WE TOO WERE ONCE” like the godless world around us, but “THE KINDNESS OF GOD OUR SAVIOR” came through Jesus and changed us thoroughly. Because we have the message that the same salvation is offered to all people, we who are saved are to model what God’s grace can do in a person’s life, even to the confident hope we have both now and into eternity.

Verse eight again ties godly living to sound Christian doctrine (vs. 8-11). If we truly believe God’s Word and submit to it as the final authority in our lives, it should be obvious by our obedience. Arguing over non-essentials, even among believers but especially with unbelievers, does more harm than good and encouraging a believer in his or her ungodly living by overlooking it is wrong. Bad behavior should be pointed out, in love, for the purpose of repentance and restoration to the local fellowship (see Galatians 6:1-2).¹⁹ Even in his final greeting, Paul gave a perfect example of how the Christians under Titus’ care can help their fellow believers (vs. 12-15).

This short letter is a wonderful reminder that right living can only come from, and should be the natural result of, right learning. Doctrine drives practice, so it is essential for Christians to know Christian truth so we can practice Christian life.

¹⁹ For those Christians who think the Bible teaches “we are not to judge others,” one only needs to look at the many passages like this which explicitly call us to make judgments in our dealing with Christians who are not living up to God’s biblical standard.