

NT SURVEY: PAULINE EPISTLES

Week 6: Pastoral Epistles

INTRODUCTION

- First Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus belong to a group of canonical letters known as the “Pastoral Epistles”.
- These letters (along with Philemon) are the only ones Paul wrote to individuals rather than to churches. These letters in particular are written to Paul’s sons in the faith:
 - Timothy –
 - Paul’s beloved child in the faith (1 Cor 4:17; 1 Tim 1:2; 2 Tim 1:2)
 - Became a disciple of Paul and accompanied him on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:1–3) and ministered with him in Berea (Acts 17:14), Athens (Acts 17:15), Corinth (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor 1:19).
 - Often sent as Paul’s representative to churches (1 Cor 4:17, 16:10; Phil 2:19; 1 Thes 3:2)
 - Titus –
 - Paul’s true child in a common faith (Tit 1:4)
 - Although Luke did not mention Titus by name in the book of Acts, it seems probable that Titus, a Gentile (Gal 2:3), met and may have been led to faith in Christ by Paul (Tit 1:4) before or during the apostle’s first missionary journey.
 - Because of his involvement with the church at Corinth during Paul’s third missionary journey, Titus is mentioned 9 times in 2 Corinthians (2:13; 7:6,13,14; 8:6,16,23; 12:18), where Paul refers to him as “my brother” (2:13) and “my partner and fellow worker” (8:23).
- Paul wrote these letters to instruct and encourage his brothers who were ministering in churches Paul had established, Timothy in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) and Titus in Crete (Tit 1:5).
 - Because of this, these letters contain valuable insight into how the church is to function – including church organization and discipline, the appointment of elders and deacons, the opposition of rebellious members or false teachers, and the maintenance of doctrinal purity.¹

¹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/pastoral-epistles.html>

1 TIMOTHY

Background and Setting²

- After being released from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30), Paul revisited several of the cities in which he had ministered, including Ephesus.
- Timothy was left behind there to deal with problems that had arisen in the Ephesian church:
 - False doctrine (1:3–7; 4:1–3; 6:3–5)
 - Disorder in worship (2:1–15)
 - The need for qualified leaders (3:1–14)
 - Materialism (6:6–19)
- Paul went on to Macedonia, from there he wrote Timothy this letter to help him carry out his task in the church (3:14,15), most likely between A.D. 62–64.

Historical and Theological Themes³

- First Timothy is a practical letter containing pastoral instruction from Paul to Timothy.
 - **1 Timothy 3:14–15** – ...I write *so that* you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.
- Since Timothy was well versed in Paul's theology, the apostle had no need to give him extensive doctrinal instruction.
 - This epistle does, however, express many important theological truths:
 - The proper function of the law (1:5–11)
 - Salvation (1:14–16; 2:4–6)
 - The attributes of God (1:17)
 - The Fall (2:13,14)
 - The person of Christ (3:16; 6:15–16)
 - Election (6:12)
 - The second coming of Christ (6:14–15)

² <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB54/first-timothy>

³ Ibid

2 TIMOTHY

Background and Setting⁴

- Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment for a short period of ministry during which he wrote 1 Timothy and Titus.
 - Second Timothy, however, finds Paul once again in a Roman prison (1:16; 2:9), apparently rearrested as part of Nero’s persecution of Christians.
- Unlike Paul’s confident hope of release during his first imprisonment (Phil 1:19,25,26; 2:24; Philemon 22), this time he had no such hopes (4:6–8).
 - In his first imprisonment in Rome (A.D. 60–62), before Nero had begun the persecution of Christians (A.D. 64), he was only under house arrest and had opportunity for much interaction with people and ministry (Acts 28:16–31).
 - At this time, 5 or 6 years later (A.D. 66–67), however, he was in a cold cell (4:13), in chains (2:9), and with no hope of deliverance (4:6).
 - Abandoned by virtually all of those close to him for fear of persecution (cf. 1:15; 4:9–12,16) and facing imminent execution, Paul wrote to Timothy, urging him to hasten to Rome for one last visit with the apostle (4:9,21).
- Whether Timothy made it to Rome before Paul’s execution is not known. According to tradition, Paul was not released from this second Roman imprisonment, but suffered the martyrdom he had foreseen (4:6).
- In this letter, Paul, aware the end was near, passed the non-apostolic mantle of ministry to Timothy (2:2) and exhorted him to continue faithful in his duties (1:6), hold on to sound doctrine (1:13,14), avoid error (2:15–18), accept persecution for the gospel (2:3,4; 3:10–12), put his confidence in the Scripture, and preach it relentlessly (3:15–4:5).

Historical and Theological Themes⁵

- It seems that Paul may have had reason to fear that Timothy was in danger of weakening spiritually.
 - This would have been a concern for Paul since Timothy needed to carry on Paul’s work (2:2).
 - While there are no historical indications elsewhere in the NT as to why Paul was so concerned, there is evidence in the epistle itself from what he wrote.
 - This concern is evident, for example, in Paul’s exhortation to “stir up” his gift (1:6), to replace fear with power, love, and a sound mind (1:7), to not be ashamed of Paul and the Lord, but willingly suffer for the gospel (1:8), and to hold on to the truth (1:13,14).

⁴ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB55/second-timothy>

⁵ Ibid

- Summing up the potential problem of Timothy, who might be weakening under the pressure of the church and the persecution of the world, Paul calls him to
 - Generally, “be strong” (2:11), the key exhortation of the first part of the letter
 - Continue to “preach the word” (4:2), the main admonition of the last part.
- These final words to Timothy include few commendations but many admonitions, including 25 imperatives.

Challenging Verses

- **1 Timothy 1:20 – Among these are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan, so that they will be taught not to blaspheme.**
 - What does it mean that Paul handed over Hymenaeus and Alexander over to Satan?
 - Hymenaeus and Alexander were false teachers that Paul had encountered
 - Paul identifies them as ones who have rejected and suffered shipwreck in regard to the faith (v. 19).
 - The purpose they were given over was so would be taught not to blaspheme.
 - Paul “handed [them] over to Satan” by removing them from the church
 - “Paul put both men out of the church, thus ending their influence and removing them from the protection and insulation of God’s people. They were no longer in the environment of God’s blessing but under Satan’s control.”⁶
 - Though the Lord could still teach them and show them grace, as Paul was shown grace (vv. 12-15), it could not be done at the expense of the church.
- **1 Timothy 2:11-15 – Roles of women in the church**
 - In 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul gives instruction on roles for women within the church, specifically dealing with teaching and authority in the public gathering.
 - This is one of the texts at the center of the debate between Complementarianism and Egalitarianism
 - Complementarianism – Equal value, though different in roles
 - Church – Only men can hold positions of leadership, women can teach/lead other women or children
 - Home – Men are servant-leaders in the home, and wives come under and submit to their husband’s leadership
 - Egalitarianism – Equal in value and roles
 - Church – Both men and women can hold any position in the church, as there is no distinction for those who are in Christ (Gal 3:28)
 - Home – Both spouses submit to one another
 - Roles should be ability-based, not gender-based

⁶ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc., 2006), 1831.

- Though this passage clearly seems to fit with the Complementarian view, those who hold an Egalitarian view would state that this was a cultural corruption of that time and is not fit for our current culture.
 - v. 11, “A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness.”
 - Women in first century Greek culture were not held in high esteem
 - The fact that they were to be taught in the church was actually contrary to the culture of that day.
 - vv. 13-14: Paul points back to creation to show that these are universal and timeless truths
 - Eve became vulnerable when she usurped Adam’s leadership
 - Adam failed in being a leader and followed Eve in her sin
- Men and women are equal in value (Gal 3:28), but from the beginning, God has designed distinct roles within the family and in the church.

• **1 Timothy 3:11 – Deacons wives or Deaconesses?**

- In 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Paul discusses the qualifications for overseers and deacons in the church
 - vv. 1-7 discuss the office of overseer
 - vv. 8-13 discuss the office of deacon
- The discrepancy comes in v. 11, where Paul discusses women.
- Some believe this refers to deacons’ wives, while others believe this is referring to female deacons, or deaconesses
 - Deacon’s wife:
 - The word “women” in v. 11 can be translated as either “women” or “wives”
 - Paul discusses male deacons in vv. 8-10, then again in vv. 12-13. It seems odd that Paul would be giving a third category of leadership in between the second.
 - Rather than a deaconess, Paul is describing an additional qualification for male deacons
 - Deaconess:
 - The word “likewise” in v. 11 is parallel to v. 8, and could indicate a third category being introduced
 - There are examples of women as servants (diákonos), such as Phoebe in Romans 16
 - There are no qualifications given for elders’ wives
- Though I would hold to Paul describing deacons’ wives, there are solid churches on both sides of this issue.

TITUS

Background and Setting⁷

- Crete, one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea, had been briefly visited by Paul on his voyage to Rome (Acts 27:7–9,12,13,21).
 - Paul returned there for ministry and later left Titus to continue and strengthen the work (1:5), much as he left Timothy at Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3), while he went on to Macedonia.
- Titus was charged by Paul to appoint elders in Crete due to the threat of Judaizers, false teachers in the church, who insisted that all Christians, Gentile as well as Jew, were bound by the Mosaic law.
 - Titus was familiar with this as he had accompanied Paul and Barnabas years earlier to the Council of Jerusalem where that heresy was the subject (Acts 15; Gal 2:1–5).
- Paul most likely wrote to Titus between A.D. 62–64, either in response to a letter from Titus or a report from Crete.

Historical and Theological Themes⁸

- Like Paul's two letters to Timothy, the apostle gives personal encouragement and counsel to a young pastor who, though well-trained and faithful, faced continuing opposition from ungodly men within the churches where he ministered.
 - Titus was to pass on that encouragement and counsel to the leaders he was to appoint in the Cretan churches (1:5).
- Similar to the letters to Timothy, the book of Titus does not focus on explaining or defending doctrine.
 - Paul had full confidence in Titus' theological understanding and convictions, evidenced by the fact that he entrusted him with such a demanding ministry.
 - Except for the warning about false teachers and Judaizers, the letter gives no theological correction.
- However, this epistle, again similar to the letters to Timothy, does affirm many doctrinal truths, including:
 - God's sovereign election of believers (1:1,2)
 - His saving grace (2:11; 3:5)
 - Christ's deity and second coming (2:13)
 - Christ's substitutionary atonement (2:14)
 - The regeneration and renewing of believers by the Holy Spirit (3:5)
- God and Christ are regularly referred to as Savior (1:3,4; 2:10,13; 3:4,6) and the saving plan is so emphasized in 2:11–14 that it indicates the major thrust of the epistle is that of equipping the churches of Crete for effective evangelism and discipleship.

⁷ <https://www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB56/titus>

⁸ Ibid

- This preparation required godly leaders who would shepherd and equip believers under their care (1:5–9).
- The believers’ primary preparation was to live among themselves with the unarguable testimony of righteous, loving, selfless, and godly lives (2:2–14) in marked contrast to the debauched lives of the false teachers (1:10–16).
- How they behaved with reference to governmental authorities and unbelievers was also crucial to their testimony (3:1–8).
- Because of this, several major themes repeat themselves throughout Titus:
 - Salvation (1:3,4; 2:10,13; 3:4,6)
 - Soundness in faith and doctrine (1:4,9,13; 2:1,2,7,8,10; 3:15)
 - Work(s) (1:16; 2:7,14; 3:1,5,8,14)

Challenging Verses

- **Titus 1:6 - ...namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion.**

Husband of One Wife (cf. 1 Tim 3:2): What is Paul referring to?

- Does this disqualify a man whose spouse has died, and he has remarried? Or a man who has had a divorce and remarried? Or an unmarried man?
- In the Greek, this term refers to a “one-woman man”
 - Some have held that this term simply goes against polygamy
 - However, rather than focusing on his marital status as a qualification, Paul’s emphasis is on the man’s character.
- Paul is looking to the man’s moral and sexual purity.

Children Who Believe (cf. 1 Tim 3:4)

- Is a man disqualified if his children are not all believers? Or if he has no children?
- The word “believe” (*pistas*) used in v. 6 can be translated as “believing” or “faithful”
- As with deaconesses, there are good churches on both sides of this issue, though I believe, given the context in Titus 1 and 1 Timothy, that Paul is calling for an elder’s children to be faithful and submissive
 - In 1 Timothy 3:4, an overseer is called to keep “his children under control with all dignity”
 - This would fit with *pistas* as faithful, with the following in Titus 1:6 describing their faithfulness (not accused of dissipation or rebellion)
 - As we view the requirements for an elder/overseer, they are qualifications of the man
 - In viewing the man’s home as a proving ground for ministry, it cannot be expected that a man can change a heart. Only God can do that! (1 Cor 3:5-7)

HOW DO THESE BOOKS RELATE TO AND HELP THE CHURCH TODAY?

- As instructional letters to younger pastors, Paul’s Pastoral Epistles are invaluable today. These letters are full of the heartfelt warnings and instructions that characterize Paul’s ministry, revealing his pastor’s heart in caring for the churches he founded.
- The Pastoral Epistles are the “how-to” manual for pastors in all places and for all time, whether he is speaking of:
 - Requirements for church leadership (1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:1–16)
 - Addressing the role of women in ministry (1 Timothy 2:12)
 - Revealing Christ as the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5)
 - Encouraging shepherds to persevere in the faith and to remain firm in sound doctrine (1 Timothy 14–16; 2 Timothy 13–14)
 - Holding to and clearly preaching the inspired truths of God’s Word (2 Timothy 3:14–4:2)
 - Warnings against false and apostate teachers (2 Timothy 3:1–17)⁹
- Though these letters are classified as “Pastoral Epistles”, Paul was writing to instruct on how believers were to conduct themselves in the household of God and to live according to sound doctrine (1 Tim 3:15, Tit 2:1).
 - Paul was writing to Timothy and Titus, but not for their benefit alone. They were to be instructing (1 Tim 1:3, 4:6, 6:17–18; 2 Tim 2:2, 4:2; Tit 2:12), teaching (1 Tim 4:11, 5:7; 2 Tim 1:11), and reminding (2 Tim 2:14; Tit 3:1) the church in these things.
- These letters offer clear instruction on teaching and discipleship, both for bringing up leaders in the church (2 Tim 2:2) and principles for discipleship in the church (Tit 2:2–8).
- These letters remind us of the need and purpose of church discipline (1 Tim 1:20, Tit 3:10).
- They help us to recognize the need for spiritual maturity and discernment for all believers, so that we can hold firm to sound doctrine and not be swayed by false teachings.

⁹ <https://www.gotquestions.org/pastoral-epistles.html>

KEY VERSES

- **1 Timothy 1:15** - It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.
- **1 Timothy 2:5** - For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.
- **1 Timothy 3:1-7** – (Qualifications for church leadership)
- **1 Timothy 3:14–15** - I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one should act in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.
- **1 Timothy 4:9-10** - It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.
- **1 Timothy 6:6-8** - But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it, either. If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.
- **2 Timothy 2:2** - The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.
- **2 Timothy 2:15** - Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a worker who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.
- **2 Timothy 2:22** - Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.
- **2 Timothy 2:24-26** - The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, skillful in teaching, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** - All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.
- **2 Timothy 4:2** - Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with great patience and instruction.
- **Titus 1:5-9** - (Qualifications for church leadership)
- **Titus 1:16** - They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed.
- **Titus 2:1** – But as for you, speak things which are fitting for sound doctrine.
- **Titus 3:8-11** - This statement is trustworthy; and concerning these things I want you to speak confidently, so that those who have believed God will be careful to engage in good deeds. These things are good and profitable for men. But avoid foolish controversies and genealogies and strife and disputes about the Law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. Reject a factious man after a first and second warning, knowing that such a man is perverted and is sinning, being self-condemned.